

THE
INVESTIGATORS
in
THE SECRET OF THE
LABYRINTH OF GODS





in

**THE SECRET
OF THE
LABYRINTH OF GODS**

The late movie director Edward Truman withdrew his scandal-ridden movie from public release and hid the film stock in a secret place. A tip from an old actress leads The Three Investigators, Jupiter, Pete and Bob, to Truman's property—which is now occupied by Truman's son, Stanley. There, they find mysterious statues of gods and a complicated labyrinth of hedges. Stanley Truman hires the three to find the film stock. However, they have to deal with a persistent journalist who is also after the same thing, but for a different reason.

The Three Investigators
in
The Secret of the Labyrinth of Gods

*Original German text by
André Marx
(from an idea by André Marx & Astrid Vollenbruch)*

*Based on characters created by
Robert Arthur*

Translated, adapted, and edited from:

Die drei ???: Labyrinth der Götter

(The Three ???: Labyrinth of Gods)

by

André Marx

(from an idea by André Marx & Astrid Vollenbruch)

(2000)

Cover art by

Aiga Rasch

(2020-04-18)

Contents

- 1. A Bike Injury**
- 2. The Legend of Utopia**
- 3. A Visit to the Old Lady**
- 4. Ask the Gods!**
- 5. The Director's Son**
- 6. Lost in the Labyrinth**
- 7. The Eavesdropper**
- 8. The Man in the Mask**
- 9. Change of Heart**
- 10. The Planetarium**
- 11. Plan B**
- 12. The Joke of a Maze**
- 13. Tailing**
- 14. On the Wrong Track**
- 15. Greco-Roman Gods**
- 16. The Ninth God**
- 17. Freedom of the Press**
- 18. Miss Jonas's Secret**

1. A Bike Injury

His legs hurt. His breath went gasping. The hot air burned his lungs. Pete kept his eyes fixed on the black asphalt, over which the wide tyres of his mountain bike rolled. The sweat ran out from under his helmet and across his face. His T-shirt was soaking wet.

His opponent was right behind him. Pete heard his breath and the whirring of the chain. He looked up. The air flickered in the heat and reflected non-existent puddles onto the hot road. Another three hundred metres, and he would have reached the top of the mountain.

“I’ll get you! I’m going to get you,” his pursuer groaned and moved closer and closer.

“No way, Bob!” Pete shifted up a gear, and pedalled furiously to increase his lead.

Beyond this mountain was the last descent, the sign ‘Rocky Beach’ in the valley was the finish line. When he reached the top, the small Californian coastal town appeared in front of him, behind it the Pacific Ocean glittered in the red of the setting sun. The town was still a distance away.

Now came the final sprint! Pete shifted up a few gears, bent low over the handlebars and dashed down the mountain. A glance at the speedometer made him smile—a confident smile. Looking ahead, the gradient would become even steeper. Bob would never make it! Pete would prove that he was faster on a mountain bike than Bob was on his road bike, and win the bet—a giant ice cream sundae was at stake!

But suddenly Bob appeared next to Pete and slowly pushed past him to the top. “Hey!” shouted the Second Investigator in indignation, as he turned and lost concentration on the road for a moment. When he looked ahead again, a large stone rushed towards him on the gravelled roadside. He swung the handlebars around and started skidding. The brakes locked the wheels, but he kept sliding over the gravel. The wheel tipped over as if in slow motion.

Pete tried to intercept, but he was going too fast. The rear tyre slammed against the stone, flew up and Pete was thrown out of the saddle. He fell, skidded over the pebbles, and sank into darkness and thorny bushes.

Cold water splashing in his face tore him from unconsciousness. Everything hurt him. His face was burning. A sharp pain in his wrist. Bob’s worried face hovered over him.

“Was I gone long?” Pete asked.

“Just a few seconds. Welcome to this world. Are you hurt?”

“Everything,” Pete muttered. “If I read your expression correctly, you’re not surprised, right?”

Bob nodded. “You look pretty banged up.”

“I feel the same way.” He straightened up. The pain was twitching all over his body. “Ouch.”

“Half your face is grazed. We have to clean it up immediately or it will get infected. Can you stand up?”

“I’ll be fine.” Groaning, Pete stood up, knocked the dust off his clothes and looked down at himself. The T-shirt was torn and his arms and legs looked as if they had been extensively sandpapered. The skin burned like fire. No wonder. Several small pebbles were stuck in the open wounds.

“My goodness, Pete! You really gave me a fright!”

“And I’ve never seen anything like it,” stammered Pete. He was still wobbly on his feet. “It’s a good thing I wore a helmet. My head is still buzzing.”

“I suggest we forget about the bet,” Bob said.

The Second Investigator nodded dazed. “It’s fine with me. How’s my bike?”

Bob inspected the mountain bike. “Seems okay. The chain is off, that’s all.”

“Thank goodness. The body heals itself. Bicycles need expensive repairs.” He hobbled back, pulled the bike up and examined it.

“Forget about your stupid bike,” Bob said annoyingly. “Your face is bleeding. We should go to the doctor right away.”

“Oh no! It’s just a few scratches.”

“A few scratches?” Bob exclaimed. “You haven’t seen yourself in the mirror yet! It’s actually a miracle that it didn’t happen to me. I’m usually the one who doesn’t miss an accident.”

“Well, it’s my turn today,” muttered Pete. “Come on, let’s go to the salvage yard. I can get cleaned up there before I go home. If my mother sees me like this, she’ll faint!”

Bob fixed the chain back onto Pete’s bike. With difficulty, Pete climbed onto the saddle and the two of them slowly continued their journey.

It wasn’t far to The Jones Salvage Yard. It belonged to Titus Jones, Jupiter’s uncle. At a side of the yard, right next to the open-air workshop, there was an old mobile home trailer, which Jupiter Jones, Pete Crenshaw and Bob Andrews used as the headquarters of their detective agency. Many a case had started from this place. Today it would have to serve them as a clinic. Pete hoped that somewhere in the chaos of their headquarters they could find plasters to treat his wounds.

But it didn’t have to get that far. As they cycled through the open gate, Jupiter and his aunt Mathilda were standing next to a mountain of scrap metal, eagerly discussing the matter. They looked up and noticed Pete’s injuries.

“What happened to you?” asked Jupiter, the First Investigator. “Did a truck jump in your path?”

Pete didn’t get a chance to answer.

“Boy!” cried Aunt Mathilda and ran towards him. “Good gracious! You look awful! Pete, you’re even bleeding! You must get to a doctor immediately! Shall Titus drive you to the hospital?”

“No, no, it’s not that bad, Mrs Jones,” Pete affirmed. “I’m fine!”

“If you look like that, you’re not well,” Aunt Mathilda decided. “Also, the wounds must be disinfected.”

“They’re not wounds,” Pete tried to calm her down. “Just a few scratches.”

“I know what scratches look like! These aren’t any! Jupe! Get a chair for Pete.” She turned and ran to the Jones family home.

The three of them watched her go. Then Pete turned to Jupe, grinning. “Didn’t you hear, Jupe? Get me a chair!”

The First Investigator pulled a face. “Get it yourself!”

“Do not disobey your aunt,” Pete snapped back.

Jupiter took a look at the pile of scrap metal and pulled out an old rusty garden chair. He unfolded it and placed it on the dusty ground. “Here you go! So tell me, what happened to you?”

“Oh, nothing at all,” grumbled Pete and sat down. “Just a little race.”

“Pete can’t lose,” said Bob. “When he saw me pass him, he threw himself into the nearest bushes.”

“Don’t joke, Bob!” Pete said. “That really hurt.”

“Sorry.”

“Maybe you really should see a doctor,” Jupiter suggested.

“Now don’t talk nonsense. I feel like an invalid with you standing around feeling sorry for me. You better tell us what’s new, Jupe!”

“Not much. Except we’ve got a fax from your father, Pete.”

The Second Investigator frowned. “From my father?”

“At least I think so, because it said ‘Wonderworld’ on the fax head, isn’t that where he works?”

Pete nodded. His father was in the Hollywood movie business. Together with his colleagues, he created tricky special effects for big movies. The company Wonderworld made UFOs fly and cars explode when it came to captivating cinema-goers with impressive stunts.

“And what did he fax?”

“A magazine article. Wait, I’ll get it!”

When Jupiter disappeared into Headquarters, Aunt Mathilda returned. A bag dangled from her arm and in her hands she carried a bowl filled with water.

“Now the wounds will be cleaned first,” she announced, put the bowl down and crouched down next to Pete. She began to carefully wipe the abrasions with a wet cloth.

The Second Investigator flinched. “I don’t know if that’s really necessary, Mrs Jones.”

“Don’t argue!” Now she tampered with Pete’s face. “It stopped bleeding,” she said. “But you’re guaranteed a black eye. You’ll have a black eye for a few weeks.” She reached into her bag and pulled out a small brown bottle and a cotton swab.

“What is this?” Pete asked anxiously.

“Iodine. It disinfects. It’s going to be painful!” She dabbed his face with the iodine-soaked cotton wool. The burning pain flashed through him.

“Ouch! This is worse than the dentist!” Pete complained.

Jupiter returned and waved the fax. Amused, he watched Aunt Mathilda’s efforts to treat teary Pete.

“Don’t just stand there,” Pete said. “You better tell us what that magazine article is.”

“It’s about a movie diva from the thirties. Her name is Josephine Jonas. Have you ever heard of her?” asked Jupiter.

“The name means something to me,” muttered Bob. “She was a star in her day, starred in many of Edward Truman’s movies.”

“Means something to me, too,” Jupiter added. “In her 40s, she disappeared pretty quickly from the scene.”

“And?” Pete asked and sucked in the air as Aunt Mathilda drilled around with her cotton swab in his arm.

“She now lives in a nursing home not far from here. The author of this article visited and interviewed her there. If you ask me, this article is badly written. From the beginning to the end, the author presses hard on the tear glands and regrets the tragic fate of a former Hollywood star, and that’s it. That’s all it says.”

Pete pulled a face. “And why is my father sending us this article?”

“I don’t know. But he did mark a passage. Wait, I’ll read it to you:”

Josephine Jonas recalls dreamily the time when Hollywood Boulevard was not yet paved with fast food restaurants and movie-making was still art and not commerce. The past decades have blurred the line between fantasy and reality in her memory. One of her

greatest achievements was an Oscar nomination in 1934 for her role in The House of Spirits. Later, she starred in Edward Truman's legendary movie Utopia, but somehow, it was never released. Truman's last movie has since become a modern legend.

"Huh?" Pete did. "And what is this? Ouch!"

"I'm almost finished, Pete," Aunt Mathilda reassured him. "Just a few more bandages and you'll be out of here. Grit your teeth."

"I was hoping you could tell me," Jupiter said. "After all, the fax came from your father."

"I haven't the slightest idea. But I'll call him right now and ask."

"Definitely sounds interesting," Bob thought. "A movie that never existed, but which Josephine Jonas starred in it nonetheless."

"Smell a mystery again?" Aunt Mathilda smiled and carefully stuck the last bandage on Pete's grazed skin. "You are incorrigible."

"Thank you, Mrs Jones," Pete said, smiling eagerly. He was glad that the ordeal was over.

"You're welcome. But if something gets infected, you should still see a doctor!" She packed her first aid kit and went back into the house.

Jupiter looked at the Second Investigator from top to bottom and grinned broadly. "Now you look like a patchwork quilt."

"Or like a Swiss cheese," Bob added.

"Or a bicycle inner tube patched a thousand times."

"A stuffed sock."

"A shooting gallery figure that was hit too often."

"A mosquito that just flew through a fan."

"Like Tom after a fight with Jerry."

"Or how—"

"Stop it!" Pete snapped at them.

"I got it. Come on, let's go to Headquarters," Jupe suggested.

Pete got out of the garden chair, folded it up and threw it back on the scrap heap. Together they entered the trailer.

Over time, they had equipped it with everything a real office needed—computer, telephone and fax machine. At the back of the trailer, there was even a small crime lab, which Bob used mostly as a darkroom for developing his photos. On the other side was a small sink, a hot plate and a mini-fridge.

Pete took out a bottle of Coke and while drinking, he took a discreet look into the small mirror hanging over the sink. He winced. Where there was no plaster covering his skin, it was scratched and scraped and glowed in bright red. His eye was half swollen. Now nothing surprised him. He really looked like a shooting gallery.

He quickly turned away and went to the phone. He was just about to look up the number for Wonderland when it rang. Although Pete was standing right next to the phone, Jupiter reached for it. For some reason it had become common practice for him to take all calls.

The First Investigator switched on the loudspeaker so that Pete and Bob could hear the conversation. "The Three Investigators. Jupiter Jones speaking."

"Hello, Jupiter, this is Henry Crenshaw."

"Good afternoon, Mr Crenshaw. I suppose you want to talk to Pete."

"Actually, I want to speak to the First Investigator."

Jupiter became very attentive and immediately showed his pompous expression. "May I gather from this that the reason for your call is business?"

“You may,” replied Mr Crenshaw amusedly. “Did you get my fax?”

“Yes. We talked about what it might mean.”

“Very simple. I have a case for you.”

2. The Legend of *Utopia*

“A case? You?”

“Why not? Or don’t you take cases from family members?”

“Yes, of course,” Jupiter said quickly. “I’m just wondering...”

Mr Crenshaw laughed. “Because I wasn’t always enthusiastic about your detective work? You’re right, Jupiter. But this time it’s quite safe, I think. I want you to find something for me. How about we meet later at the ice cream parlour in Rocky Beach and I’ll tell you all about it? I’m now at the garage, working on a zombie head.”

“You what?”

“A doll’s head for a horror movie we’re working on. It’s broken, and the eyes just won’t pop out, but I can fix that. I could be at the ice cream parlour in an hour.”

“All right. See you in an hour!” Jupiter hung up and turned to his fellow detectives.

“What do you say?”

“That my plan was ruined,” growled Pete.

“What kind of plan?”

“I had thought about staying at the salvage yard for a long time today and only going home when my parents were already asleep so they wouldn’t see me. I guess that’s not gonna happen. I wonder what my father will say.”

“What happened to you?” Mr Crenshaw turned pale when The Three Investigators came to his table and he saw his son. “What happened?”

“No harm,” Pete claimed.

“It doesn’t look like it to me,” Mr Crenshaw said.

“I landed badly riding my bike.”

“You shouldn’t always ride so fast!”

“I wasn’t that fast,” Pete lied. “There was this rock in my way.”

Mr Crenshaw shook his head. “One of these days you’re gonna injure yourself seriously in your sporting frenzy.”

Pete wanted to escape this unpleasant situation as quickly as possible. “So what’s your mission, Dad?”

He still looked sceptically at his son, but he agreed to change the subject. “You’ve read the article, so you have a rough idea what it’s about.”

“About *Utopia*,” Jupiter surmised.

“Right. Edward Truman’s mysterious movie that nobody really knows if it exists or not.”

“Tell us more about it,” the First Investigator asked.

“Truman was a brilliant director,” Mr Crenshaw began. “He made really stunning movies, which were very impressive during his time, including tricks with technology. After his death in the sixties, there was a rumour that he made a movie decades ago that never saw the light of day. That movie was *Utopia*. It was soon said that it had been Truman’s true masterpiece. Others claimed that the movie was terribly bad and was therefore kept under lock and key. But after rumours and never anything solid had been heard, it was finally

assumed that *Utopia* never really existed. After Truman's death, a modern legend was created."

"And now Josephine Jonas has claimed that she was in *Utopia*," Jupiter continued the story. "And the entertainment community is in a frenzy."

Mr Crenshaw nodded. "Exactly. This journalist who interviewed Miss Jonas and wrote the article had no idea what kind of hornet's nest he was stirring. The legend of *Utopia* hasn't been talked about for ages and now it's back in everyone's mouth."

"And what do we have to do with this, Dad?" Pete wanted to know.

"They are talking about this a lot at Wonderland. *Utopia* is said to have been a science fiction movie with breathtaking special effects. If you believe the stories, Truman developed completely new techniques to realize his vision. Of course, we're very interested in that, because it may even be possible to use those tricks today, even though the movie is so old. So I came up with the idea of asking the three smartest guys on the West Coast if they'd like to look for the film stock." He smiled broadly. "After all, you're on holiday and have plenty of time."

"Look for it?" Bob repeated. "But how?"

"It's up to you," Mr Crenshaw replied calmly. "After all, you are the detectives. Think of something!"

"So you mean that the movie actually exists? That it's not just a legend?" Pete asked.

Mr Crenshaw shrugged his shoulders. "I don't know. If it exists, and if you find it, you'll have a huge coverage."

"Sounds exciting," Pete thought. "If it is shown in the cinemas afterwards and we're mentioned in the credits, we're in."

"Ha! You hope," Jupiter contradicted. "Anyway, we're up for it!"

"That's great!" Mr Crenshaw said. "If you find the film stock or can prove it never existed, I'll buy you a giant sundae!"

"Then the betting debts will be paid off after all," grinned Bob and immediately got a nasty look from Pete.

"What kind of betting debts?" Mr Crenshaw asked.

"Oh, nothing, Dad. Nothing at all," Pete affirmed. "The Three Investigators will now get to work."

"Wrong," the First Investigator said. "We can't start yet."

"Why not?" Bob asked.

"Because we're sitting in an ice cream parlour and we haven't had ice cream yet. You know, we can't work on an empty stomach."

"Shouldn't it a full stomach?" Bob doubted.

"With you, perhaps. It works the other way around with me," Jupiter remarked. "Waiter! A large fruit cup, please."

"That took a long time," Pete moaned when Bob came to Headquarters the next day. "We've been waiting for you for hours." He looked at the clock with a straight face.

"I'm sure it would have been quicker if you had helped me," Bob said irritably. He had spent hours searching newspaper archives at the *Los Angeles Times* building, where his father worked, to Rocky Beach. In scorching heat. And for that he was now being frowned upon.

"I couldn't. I had to help Aunt Mathilda," Jupiter defended himself.

"And I had to mow my neighbour's lawn," Pete said. "He looked at me silly. He asked me if I'd been in a fight with a gorilla. Very funny."

“Interesting association,” Jupiter found. “And not to be entirely dismissed. Somehow you look even meaner today than yesterday. Now all these abrasions are crusty and dropping off.”

“Could we please change the subject?” Pete asked, annoyed. “Come on, Bob, tell us what you found out.”

“All right. I went through half the newspaper archives,” Bob began. “Although I know my way around there quite well, but if you want to follow the life of a famous director over several decades, at some point you find yourself in a huge mountain of old newspapers and don’t even know what belongs where anymore.”

“I copied a few articles and wrote out the most important ones. So *Utopia* should really become a great science fiction movie. It was about an extraterrestrial race living on the yet unknown tenth planet of our solar system and making contact with Earth.”

“So it’s an invasion story,” Pete surmised.

“No. It was more about the meeting of two cultures that were completely different from each other. It was a quite intelligent story, then,” Bob explained. “The fact is that the movie *Utopia* was officially announced by the producers and the movie company. There was a script, the actors were engaged, the pre-production had started and a date for the start of the shooting was also fixed. Truman said in an interview that this was the best and most elaborate movie he had ever worked on. He promised the audience a masterpiece.”

“And what went wrong?” Jupiter wanted to know.

“That is the big question,” Bob continued. “Because from here on, the reports contradict each other. In one article, it was said that the shooting was in full swing, in another one it was even said that it was almost finished. Then all that was taken back again. No footage was ever released, the shooting was cancelled, and so on. Conclusion—we don’t know anything for sure.”

“At the end of the whole mess, Edward Truman officially announced that the movie would not be made after all, the script was miserable, the costs would explode and be far above the budget. They would think about continuing the work on *Utopia* later, but at that time the project was on hold. Well, and that was it. The whole story was soon forgotten, Truman retired from the movie business and nobody talked about it anymore.”

“After his death, all of this was warmed up again briefly, but then it was not taken up by the various media.”

“Until today,” Jupiter stated. “Until Josephine Jonas claimed she was in the movie.”

“Right,” Bob affirmed.

Pete scratched his head. “I’m sorry, guys, but I don’t see the big secret. The script was bad, the movie was getting too expensive, so the project was scrapped. It’s nothing new, this kind of thing happens all the time in Hollywood. How many times did my father work on special effects you never saw in the movies, because the movie never got finished!”

“You may have a point, Pete. But I’d still like to know what really happened back then. If Miss Jonas says that she stood in front of the camera for the movie, then something must have been shot. The footage can’t have disappeared. These film reels are probably lying around in some archive of the company.”

“I’ve thought about that,” Bob said. “Unfortunately, the movie company no longer exists. It went bankrupt twenty years ago. There’s nothing left.”

“Hmm,” Jupiter murmured and pinched his lower lip. “Then I see only one option at the moment—we have to go and see Miss Jonas and ask her about the story. Maybe she knows where the film stock has gone. The journalist obviously didn’t believe a word of it and didn’t ask further.”

“Too bad we can’t interview Mr Truman himself,” Pete said. “It’s just like a stupid TV crime novel—the only one who knows the answer to the mystery is dead.”

“Would be boring otherwise,” Bob muttered. “But perhaps his son, Stanley Truman, could help us. He’s still alive. I haven’t been able to find out where, though.”

“Let’s take care of Josephine Jonas first,” Jupiter suggested. “It should be no problem to visit her in the nursing home.”

“It’s a good idea,” Bob agreed. “In fact, she may know more than any other actor involved at the time.”

“How come?” Pete asked.

“Oh... Haven’t I told you about that?” Bob said. “The gossip columns were full of it then. Josephine Jonas and Edward Truman were lovers.”

3. A Visit to the Old Lady

“Hopefully I’ll never grow old,” muttered Pete as they stood in front of the grey building block that had been clapped against the mountainside.

“I thought it was your stated goal to live to be at least a hundred,” Bob replied. “That’s what you always say.”

“Sure,” Pete said. “But then I want to live in my own house and not rely on outside help.”

“Well, you can’t have it all your way,” Bob remarked. “Would you like to live in one of those things, Jupe?”

The First Investigator shook his head thoughtfully.

“Jupe must have five children to look after him one day,” said Bob. “And twenty grandchildren who sit on his lap and ask him to tell them his detective stories from the good old days.”

Pete smiled. “Right. And then he’ll plug in his pipe, take a long puff, blow the smoke slowly and remember us.”

“And I will tell my twenty grandchildren about the day when Second Investigator Pete Crenshaw came back from a harmless bicycle race looking like a walking pizza,” Jupe quipped. “Come on, let’s go see Miss Jonas. I don’t want to stay here any longer than I have to.”

They entered the building through the glass sliding door. A pungent smell of disinfectant struck them. A long corridor with grey PVC flooring lay in front of them. An old man in his squeaky wheelchair just pushed himself past them.

“This looks more like a dormitory,” Pete whispered. “Miss Jonas seems to be worse off than we thought.”

“Can I help you?” A woman in a white coat of a nurse stuck her head out of a small glass office. Her black hair was tied back tightly and she looked at The Three Investigators without a trace of kindness.

“Yes, we’re looking for Miss Jonas. Josephine Jonas.”

Her face darkened even more. “Miss Jonas is not available.”

“Isn’t she in this home?” Jupiter wanted to know.

“Yes, she is. Are you relatives?”

“No, we—”

“Only relatives are allowed to visit,” the nurse explained briefly. “Now get out.”

“I think Miss Jonas should decide for herself who she wants to receive and who she doesn’t,” said Jupiter indignantly.

“She already has. She doesn’t want to see anyone.” Angrily, the woman crossed her arms and waited, bobbing her right foot.

Now Pete tried his luck and said: “But recently she received a visit from a journalist who —”

“I knew it was that story again! Since that article came out, all hell has broken loose. Miss Jonas doesn’t want to talk to any more journalists! If you’re looking for a story for your school paper, do it somewhere else!”

“It’s not about a school paper, it’s about...” Bob tried to jam in.

"About that movie, I know," she said to Bob.

"How many people have been here for this?" Bob continued.

"Half a dozen. We sent most of them away. One woman was particularly persistent. She suddenly found herself in Miss Jonas's room without anyone letting her in. Poor Miss Jonas was all upset afterwards. We had to give her a sedative. We haven't let anyone see her since." She looked them right in the eye. "The whole thing's too stressful for her. Please leave now!"

"Fine," Jupiter gave in. "Give her our regards." He turned and trotted out of the building, followed by Pete and Bob.

"I'm surprised at that," Pete began, when they had walked a few metres. "You don't usually give up so easily, Jupe."

"I could have talked my mouth off, even then we would never have got past that dragon," Jupe said. "But this building does have a back entrance. We will find Josephine Jonas, don't worry."

Determined, he walked down the street to the parking lot entrance to get to the back of the nursing home.

"Do you think that's a good idea?" Pete asked. "You heard what the nurse said. The last visit was too much for Miss Jonas. Maybe we really should leave her alone."

"We don't want to ambush her, we just want to talk to her." Jupe remained persistent. "Who knows what that reporter did to her?"

"What if we get caught?" Pete asked.

"My goodness, Pete!" Jupe exclaimed. "We're not gonna get caught!"

The rear part of the parking lot was reserved for trucks. Here there was a small loading ramp, which could be used to transport large objects through a large metal double door into the interior of the building. A truck drove straight ahead and opened the loading hatch.

"They're probably bringing the food for all the residents of the home. This is our chance!" Jupiter went straight for the door.

"What are you doing?" hissed Bob.

"We're going in, what did you think?" Jupe said.

"Just like that?" Bob asked.

"Sure."

"What if someone asks us what we're doing there?" Pete asked.

"If we walk through naturally, no one will ask us," claimed the First Investigator. "Just act naturally!"

The truck driver was pushing the food on a metal roller container over the ramp when The Three Investigators simply walked past him into the building. Bare concrete walls welcomed them. A sign pointed to the right to the cold store, on the left was a freight lift, next to it a staircase. Jupiter walked purposefully towards it.

But just before they reached the stairs, a man turned around the corner of the corridor and saw The Three Investigators. "Hey! Where are you going?"

"Uh..." Pete began.

"To the kitchen," Jupiter lied without much thought.

The man laughed hard. "Ah, doing community service, huh? I suppose you are here to peel potatoes. Hurry up, they're cooking the meals now. Do you know where you're going?"

"No, we... we're here for the first time," Bob replied.

"Second floor, down the hall, follow the noise."

"Thank you very much," cried Jupiter and hurriedly climbed the steps before the man could ask any more questions. When they were out of earshot, he whispered to his friends: "You see? It works!"

“Yes, excellent,” Pete moaned. “My heart almost stopped just now.”

“Now we know where not to go—the second floor,” Jupe said. “The best thing is to go all the way upstairs and walk around from the top floor down.”

Fortunately, no one met them on the stairs. There was probably a passenger lift inside.

Finally, they reached the seventh floor. Jupiter opened the metal door and stepped out into an empty corridor. Here, too, grey PVC floors and warm white light. Right next to the door was the nurses’ room for this floor. The door was opened, but there was no one there at that moment. Rooms were lined up on both sides of the corridor, just like a hospital.

“We are lucky,” Bob remarked. “The names of the residents are on the doors. Now all we have to do is find Josephine Jonas.”

They walked down the corridor, looking at names on the doors. An old woman came shuffling up, but she didn’t seem to notice them. Jupiter nodded his head to her, but she disappeared silently into one of the rooms.

They passed a common room where some old people were sitting and watching TV. A nurse was with them, but she did not notice The Three Investigators. Finally, they had combed this floor and went down the stairs to the floor below. Again, there were dozens of doors, but none of them belonged to Miss Jonas.

On the fifth floor, they were met by a suspicious-looking nurse who was pushing a resident in a wheelchair. Pete would have liked to turn back immediately, but Jupiter didn’t let himself be distracted and continued purposefully through the corridor. He hoped the nurse wouldn’t speak to him, but just as they were passing her, she turned around and asked, “Can I help you? Looking for someone?”

Bob started stuttering “No, uh... we—”

“Yes, we’re looking for Mrs Smith,” Jupiter stepped in and smiled friendly. “We are her grandchildren.”

She frowned. “I didn’t know Mrs Smith had grandchildren.”

“We have never visited her here before,” continued Jupiter. “We’re not from California.”

Now she smiled. “Her room is on the third floor. Number 311.”

The First Investigator nodded gratefully to her and continued on his way. It was only in the stairwell that Bob dared to breathe again. “That was close. How did you know a Mrs Smith lived here, Jupe?”

“I did not know,” Jupe replied. “Smith is one of the most common American last name.”

Bob shook his head. “And I almost betrayed us. You’ve got some nerve!”

“I don’t know why you’re so nervous,” claimed Jupiter. “We are not committing a crime! We just want to visit someone.”

They finally found what they were looking for on the fourth floor.

“Here she is,” whispered Pete. “Josephine Jonas!”

Jupiter looked around carefully, but at that moment they were alone in the corridor. He knocked softly on the door. No one answered.

“Perhaps she is hard of hearing,” whispered Bob.

Jupiter knocked again, this time louder. No reaction. “Miss Jonas?” he called out. When still nothing moved, he pushed the handle down. The door was unlocked.

Slowly they stepped into a small room. There was nobody there.

“This place looks like a hotel room,” Pete remarked.

By one wall, there was a simple bed. There was a small desk, a cupboard, an armchair and a sliding door leading into the bathroom. Only the filled bookshelf and the many photographs on the walls gave the room a personal touch. Jupiter took a look at the photos.

Most of them were black and white photographs—Josephine Jonas at a young age at movie premières, with friends and in the arms of a man Jupiter recognized as Edward Truman.

“She’s not here,” Bob belatedly noted. “Probably in some common room somewhere. Let’s get out of here!” He turned around and opened the door, and then closed it again.

“What’s wrong, Bob?” Pete asked.

He put his index finger on his lips and hissed: “There is someone in the corridor! A nurse and an old woman. We’ll have to wait till they pass!” They listened. Slowly, footsteps came closer. Then a voice came through the door: “Here we are, Miss Jonas—your room!”

4. Ask the Gods!

The Three Investigators looked at each other in panic.

“They’re coming in here!” Bob gasped.

“Go! Hide!” Pete quickly opened the closet door and squeezed between the clothes. He quietly pulled the closet shut from the inside.

Bob looked around him in a hurry. This room was just too small to offer any other hiding places. Meanwhile, the steps were right outside the door. Any moment someone would come in! Bob threw himself on the floor and crawled under the bed. Jupiter disappeared in the bathroom at the last second, climbed into the shower and closed the curtain. Then they heard the door opened.

“Thanks a lot, Mister,” sounded an old, frail voice.

“You’re welcome,” a man replied. “Will you be all right?”

“Oh, yes, yes, I’m not an old woman!”

“I’ll pick you up in twenty minutes for your meal,” the man said. “Don’t forget your medication.”

“No, no.”

The door closed. Shuffling steps approached the bathroom. The door was pushed open, the light turned on and Josephine Jonas’s shadow fell on the shower curtain from outside. What should Jupiter do now? If he made even a sound, the old lady would probably have a heart attack. On the other hand, it was also absurd to wait twenty minutes until she had gone out again.

After all, they were here to talk to her! Jupiter made a decision. He cleared his throat. “Miss Jonas?”

“Oops! Oops! Who’s there?” Miss Jonas cried in surprise.

Jupiter pulled the curtain aside. “Do not be afraid, Miss Jonas. My name is Jupiter Jones. I’m sorry for intruding into your room. I wish to speak to you.”

A small, wrinkled woman with snow-white hair stood in front of him in a stooped position. Jupiter was surprised at how comparatively young she looked, although she must have been about ninety years old. She was wearing a simple housecoat and was staring at him with wide eyes and an open mouth. In her bony hand, she held two or three tablets, which she was about to swallow, and with the other hand she leaned on a stick. His words did not seem to have got through to her at all.

But suddenly the countless wrinkles on her face turned into a smile. “Oh, I know, you’re here for the shower, Mister.”

Jupiter frowned. “The shower? No, Miss Jonas, I’m here to talk to you.” He climbed out of the ceramic basin. “Two of my friends are here, too. Come on, I’ll introduce you to them.”

He stepped out. Pete and Bob had overheard the conversation and had already crawled out of their hiding places. Miss Jonas was spared another shock.

“Oops! How did you get in here?”

“As I said, it was not our intention to break in here, Miss Jonas,” Jupiter said. “We were just looking for you. This is Pete Crenshaw and Bob Andrews.”

"But did you hurt yourself badly?" she asked, looking at Pete's battered face. Then she looked irritated from one to the other. "And you are not here for the shower? Then what are you here for?"

"We are not here to fix anything, but to talk to you, Miss Jonas," Jupiter tried again. "Please sit down."

"But this is my home," she said with a smile. "I have to offer you a place, Mister. Sit down, sit down!" She shuffled over to the bed and sat on it in slow motion. Jupiter sat down on the desk chair, Bob and Pete on armchairs.

"So what do you want to fix?"

Jupiter sighed. "Nothing, Miss Jonas. We want to talk to you about your movies."

Her face cleared up. "About my movies! Have you seen them, Mister?"

"A few," Jupiter lied.

"Which one did you like best? I bet it was *Angel in Black*, wasn't it?"

Jupiter realized that he was on the right track. He smiled friendly. "Exactly. You were great on it."

She pulled a wry face. "Everyone says so. But it was a bad movie. The director was a hack. What about you two?" She turned to Bob and Pete.

"Uh..." Pete stammered.

"I especially liked your first movie which you did with Edward Truman," Bob replied, without actually knowing what movie that was.

She nodded with a smile and looked pensive at the ceiling. "Dear Edward. He was a genius." Then she looked at The Three Investigators again and beamed all over her face. "Surely you want an autograph?"

"Yes... Yes, of course," Pete claimed.

She pulled open the drawer of her bedside table and took out three small pieces of paper and a pen. With shaky fingers she scribbled her name on the paper. "I used to do it better," she muttered doggedly. "I must be getting old after all." She passed them the autographed pieces of paper. "Here you are. Is there anything else I can do for you?"

"Tell us about Edward Truman," Bob asked.

"Edward!" cried Miss Jonas and the radiance returned to her face. "He was a good man! Do you remember the day of the opening night of *Golden Dust*? Oh, no, you're probably too young for that. He was so wonderful then!"

She bent over conspiratorially. "You know, his wife had been dead for a few years at the time and we were lovers. He gave me a rose sprinkled with gold dust for the première of the movie. Isn't that romantic? We were so happy!" Suddenly her expression changed. She looked sad and scared. "... Until *Utopia*."

Jupiter listened carefully and said: "What did you just say? Until *Utopia*? You mean the movie?"

Startled, she looked at him. "Now I've given it away!" she gasped. "But it was a secret!"

"What was a secret?" Jupiter asked.

"Nothing, nothing," she replied quickly and looked to the side.

"We know about the movie, Miss Jonas," assured Jupiter. "It's not a secret anymore."

"You know nothing," she replied angrily. "This movie separated Edward and me."

"Why? What happened back then?" Jupiter probed. "Why was the movie never shown?"

She was silent.

"Has it ever been finished?" Bob asked.

"Yes. Almost."

"And where is it now?" Jupiter asked.

“Only the gods know,” replied Miss Jonas stubbornly.

“Why won’t you tell us?” Pete asked carefully.

“Because I don’t know,” she claimed. She demonstratively looked out the window.

“Only the gods know the secret.”

“What secret?”

There was no response.

“Miss Jonas?”

“Ask the gods! What did you say you were going to fix? You’d better get on with your work!”

5. The Director's Son

"I've rarely seen such a strange woman," muttered Bob as they cycled back to the salvage yard.

They had tried for another five minutes to get Josephine Jonas to talk, but she had been stubbornly silent. Then Bob had pointed out to his friends that the nurse could come back at any moment, so they had said goodbye to Miss Jonas and left the building through the back exit.

"I'm still not entirely sure whether she was really senile or just pretending. What do you think?" Bob asked.

"She wasn't quite right in the head," said Pete. "'Ask the gods!' And then this constant drivel about fixing something. I don't think she was just teasing us."

"In any case, we haven't made any progress," Bob noted.

"I wouldn't say that," contradicted Jupiter. "The memory of Edward Truman and *Utopia* upset her. Something must have happened back then that even now she wants to hide something from us."

"She has broken up with her lover. Probably because he was having so much stress with his movie. That's all, if you ask me," the Second Investigator said.

"In any case, the movie really existed," continued Jupiter. "That's a clue!"

"Provided the old woman can still tell fantasy from reality," Bob remarked.

They reached the Jones Salvage Yard, let themselves roll over the dusty salvage yard and parked their bikes. Back at Headquarters, they all rushed to the refrigerator as everyone wanted to be the first to get refreshment. This day had been unusually hot. Finally, they sat exhausted on the armchairs.

"So what now? How do we go on?" Bob wanted to know and looked at his friends.

"Well, we still have a second lead," Jupe said. "Stanley Truman, the director's son. If he still lives nearby, we can visit him."

"We're probably not the first to think of it," Pete surmised. "If Josephine Jonas is besieged by reporters, how will it be for Stanley Truman?"

"We can try," said Jupiter and switched on the computer.

"What are you up to?" Pete asked.

"I'm going to the California Phone Directory on the Internet to search the Los Angeles area for Stanley Truman." He found the website and searched for 'Truman'.

"Now I'm curious. Here we go. Truman... Truman..." He had the names scroll across the screen. "Stanley Truman! There are three of them. One lives in Torrance, one in Beverly Hills, one in Norwalk."

"Unless Edward Truman died impoverished, I think Torrance and Norwalk are out," Bob said. "My money's on Beverly Hills."

"That is the most likely," Jupiter agreed, noted the address and telephone number and switched off the computer.

"And now? Are you gonna call?" Pete asked.

"If you're right, Pete, then Mr Truman must be quite annoyed by all the people who want to see him about his famous father. Beverly Hills is not far. We should go there right away."

The Second Investigator frowned. "Go there? Do you think we can get to him easier through a visit than a phone call?"

"No. But he can't hang up on a visit," Jupe said.

"But he can kick us out," Bob argued.

"Sure. But until then, we can convince him that we're not interested in a story for some rag, but in solving a mystery. Maybe he's on our side."

"Your optimism never ceases to amaze me, Jupe," Bob remarked. "But today it's too late. The sun sets in half an hour."

"So what? It won't be dark for another hour," Jupe countered. "We can easily make it to Beverly Hills before dark—if we take the car."

"You're just too lazy to cycle all the way," Pete said. "But it's okay with me. After Beverly Hills, it's pretty mountainous. And I've had enough of downhill cycling for a while."

"We can drive right across Beverly Hills and get to Mr Truman's house normally, but there's a shorter way there," Pete said, sitting in the passenger seat of Bob's yellow Beetle, holding the map in his hand.

"What's the alternative?"

"We turn left just before entering the town and drive to the edge of the forest. Then we have to walk a bit and approach the property from behind," Pete suggested. "There should also be an access there—according to the map, anyway."

"Let's give it a try," Bob agreed to the proposal and left Sunset Boulevard before they even reached Beverly Hills.

The neighbourhood quickly became lonely. Where the high society life of Los Angeles had previously raved, now simple detached houses lined the narrow, steeply rising street. After a short distance, the buildings on the left gave way to an extensive orange plantation, on the right to a large dark green oak forest.

"Stop here!" Pete directed Bob. "It's not far from here!"

Bob parked the car at the side of the road, they got out and looked for an entrance into the forest. Jupiter had soon found a small path. The forest wasn't very big, actually it was just a narrow strip. "The forest ends over there," Jupiter said.

The oaks receded and gave a view of a small valley on the edge of Beverly Hills. In the distance, the road and the villas of the *nouveau riche* could be seen. No doubt it was an appropriate area for the son of a famous director. Not far from them, in the middle of the valley, was a small white house. It had a striking dome as its roof, which gave the building a temple-like appearance.

"Hey! I know that house!" cried Bob.

"Where from?" Pete asked.

"It was featured in one of the articles I found on Edward Truman," Bob remarked. "I remember the dome."

"So Stanley lives in his father's house," Pete concluded. "Well, I'd do the same thing with a fancy place like that."

They looked at the little house in the greenery for a while. The setting sun slowly coloured the white façades red. The shadows of the surrounding trees pushed into the valley.

Suddenly Jupiter gasped in surprise. "My goodness!"

"What's wrong, Jupe?" Pete asked.

"Don't you see?" Jupe exclaimed. "Well, there!" He pointed down into the valley.

"There's a beautiful house with a domed roof," said Pete unmoved. "And?"

“Around the house!” Jupe said.

“Is a garden,” Pete remarked.

Now Bob noticed it too. “This ain’t no garden,” he said, amazed.

Pete squinted his eyes together. What he thought were little trees or bushes were hedges. They surrounded the house and wriggled like endless snakes through the valley. The paths in between had looked completely random at first, but at second glance they turned into a bizarre pattern that filled the entire garden.

“A labyrinth!” Bob exclaimed.

6. Lost in the Labyrinth

“This is huge,” Bob marvelled. “That... that’s incredible!”

“A real maze, in the truest sense of the word,” Jupiter remarked. “Bigger than a football field!”

“Goodness, it must take years to trim the hedges,” Pete thought. “Probably you can start over again once you’re through. Tell me, do we have to go through it to get to the house?”

“Looks like it,” Bob said. “Look, on the side facing the road, there’s a wide path through the maze. But not here. I guess we should have gone through Beverly Hills after all.”

“Too late,” Jupiter said. “In any case, I have no desire to turn back. We’ll just go through the labyrinth.”

“What if we get lost?” Pete interjected.

Jupiter waved him off. “It won’t be that complicated.”

Determined, Jupiter made his way down the grassy slope to the valley. Bob and Pete followed. Soon they reached the hedge wall.

“So what now?” Bob asked at a loss. “There is no entrance here. Shall we march all the way to the outside? This is taking forever.”

“In any case, we can’t fight our way through,” Pete said. “The hedge is too thick for that.”

“We can’t even see over it,” Jupiter noted and jumped up into the air. It was not enough to get a glimpse over the hedge. “Let’s go right first. Somewhere there’ll be an entrance.”

Jupiter was right. After about a hundred metres there was a gap. “The entrance to the labyrinth.” In joyful anticipation, he rubbed his hands. “Let’s do it!”

“You can’t wait to get lost, can you?” Pete mocked.

“Oh no! We won’t get lost!” Jupiter stepped through the opening and turned left. Reluctantly, Bob and Pete followed him.

The gravel path between the two hedges made a long curve into the labyrinth and finally led them to an intersection. Without thinking long, Jupiter went straight ahead. After two or three bends the passage ended in front of an impenetrable green wall.

“That was probably nothing,” Pete remarked gloatingly. “Back to the intersection!”

This time they tried the right way. It meandered endlessly through the valley without a single turn but at some point, a thorny hedge blocked their way.

“I don’t believe it,” Pete moaned. “Back again!”

The last of the possibilities presented them with a new choice after twenty metres—left or right? This time Bob intuitively chose a direction that led them deeper into the labyrinth. There were more and more forks and intersections and soon The Three Investigators had completely lost their sense of direction.

“I don’t know anything more,” Pete confessed. “Are we even going in the right direction? I feel as if we’ve been to that intersection before.”

“It’s your imagination,” Jupe contradicted him. “It’s just that the intersections all look very similar.”

“That doesn’t make things any easier. But how good that we listened to the great First Investigator, Jupiter Jones, who was adamant that we would not get lost.”

"I didn't think it would be this difficult," Jupe said.

"Oh, no." Pete angrily kicked a small stone across the path.

"From now on, we should mark every path we take so that we know if we're really going in circles." Jupiter drew a question mark in the gravel with the tip of his shoe and entered the next passage.

"There's only one catch," Bob said as he followed the First Investigator. "It's getting dark. If we haven't found an exit in ten minutes, the question marks won't help us."

"No problem! Ten minutes is more than enough!" Jupiter was by no means convinced by his words, but he could not possibly admit that he too was beginning to have doubts.

Determined, he chose a direction at the next junction, marked it with the question mark and continued his way. It continued criss-crossing through the maze until it finally got so dark that the hedges were only dark walls. The markings on the ground cannot be seen. More and more often they were just scrambling along the narrow passages of the maze.

Finally, Pete stopped angrily. "So ten minutes is more than enough, huh? I haven't the faintest idea where we are, Jupiter Jones! And I have no desire to grope through the darkness here for another hour. Do you have a plan?"

"Well," Jupiter began embarrassed, "there is a perfectly safe way out of any maze."

"And what is that?" Pete asked.

"You always walk along the right wall. Or the left wall, whichever you prefer."

"And what's the point?" Pete asked without understanding.

Bob knew the answer. "If you always keep to one side, you systematically run the maze. You literally go down every single path and at some point you inevitably end up at the exit. The disadvantage of this method is that you may have to take gigantic detours. The advantage is that it also works in the dark."

"Oh, great," Pete gasped. "If I'm guessing right, this garden covers at least five kilometres of track. We had better make the right choice!"

"The question is which is quicker—a systematic search or aimless wandering," Jupiter said.

"You guys go on discussing it, I'm gonna go." Pete turned round a bend and jumped in horror.

Ten metres away from him stood a figure. Its white clothes shimmered eerily in the darkness. Without moving, it looked at Pete. "Bob! Jupe!" he hissed. "Come here!"

They approached curiously. Now the three of them faced the figure. It had still not moved an inch. And wouldn't.

"It's a statue," Bob said.

Pete squinting his eyes together. "Really? And I thought I saw someone standing there. I think I need glasses."

"Wouldn't have been so silly if there was really someone standing there," Bob interjected. "Then we could have asked for directions. Unfortunately, the statue won't be able to give us any information."

"Who knows? Perhaps it is a kind of signpost," pondered Jupiter.

They walked toward the statue. It was an old man with a huge beard carved from white stone. He wore a wide robe, held a kind of sceptre, and gazed masterfully into the distance. He looked Greek.

"Zeus," said Jupiter.

"What?"

"This is Zeus, father of the gods in Greek mythology, son of Kronos and Rhea, ruler of heaven and earth, creator of lightning and thunder, conqueror of the Titans, god of—"

"All right!" Pete interrupted his rant. "We have understood. Zeus appreciates the introduction, but you can spare us the details."

"Your lack of thirst for knowledge is deplorable," Jupiter thought, but did not continue with his explanations.

"How can you be so sure it's Zeus?" Bob asked.

"Could be another god."

"There it is!" Jupiter pointed to the pedestal on which the statue stood. The name was carved in the stone.

Pete scratched his chin. "Ruler of heaven and earth, yes? That gives me an idea." He walked up to the image of the gods and shook it. "Seems to be anchored in the ground. Very good." He put his arms around Zeus' neck and began to pull himself up by it.

"What are you doing!" cried Bob in horror.

"I'm using Zeus as a lookout so we finally know exactly where we are in this cursed labyrinth."

"You'll break his head off!" Bob shouted.

"Come on, it'll hold." Pete placed his foot in the crook of the statue's arm, lifted himself up and finally sat on Zeus's shoulders.

"And what do you see?" Jupiter asked.

"The house. We've actually got closer. At least something," Pete said. "By the way, someone's home, the lights are on."

"Can you see the way there?" Bob asked.

"Are you kidding? All I see is hedges, all over the place," Pete replied. "But at least we know where we're going."

"It's just no good," said Jupiter. "If we had a view from above, then we could figure out the way. Anyway, a maze is a puzzle."

"Well, I can see a bit," Pete corrected himself. "I already know that there is no point going straight ahead or left at the intersection, because they are both dead ends."

"Hey! That's the solution!" cried Bob. "We'll just have to look over the hedges from time to time."

"And how, wise guy?" Pete quipped. "It's not like there are statues everywhere."

"By climbing on Juve's shoulders."

"On mine?" The First Investigator was outraged. "Why mine of all people?"

"Because you put us in this position," Pete replied forcefully.

"And besides, you wouldn't want us to put you on our shoulders, would you?" Bob mocked.

"Why not?"

"Because you weigh more than both of us combined!" Bob cried.

"That's an exaggeration!" protested Jupiter.

"There's no point in getting excited, Juve, you're outvoted," Pete stated. "Come on, come here, I'll climb on your shoulders right now, it's the easiest way up from here."

"And then?" Juve asked. "Shall I walk through the maze with you, or what do you imagine?"

"Sure! It's the fastest way!" Pete said.

Jupiter wanted to appeal, but then he noticed the gloomy looks of his friends. For once, they were right. He was responsible for them getting lost. But who could have guessed that this maze was so complicated!

"All right," he sighed. "I'll play the pack mule."

He stood next to the statue and Pete climbed onto Jupiter's shoulders, the latter moaning and groaning in agony. The Second Investigator grinned contentedly. "Giddy-up, mule, let's go!"

Jupiter trotted off. Pete could see the next crossroads ten metres ahead and could estimate which paths led in the right direction and which turned out to be dead ends. Under his command, they approached the centre surprisingly quickly.

"We're almost there!" he shouted after five minutes.

"It's about time!" growled Jupiter. "Everything hurts me already. And sweat is running off my forehead."

"It doesn't matter," Pete claimed. "You might even lose a few grams. If we do this for an hour every day, maybe in a year we can think about switching roles."

"Very funny."

"Turn left up there, and we should be all right," Pete directed.

When The Three Investigators turned the corner, they finally moved out of the hedges. In front of them was a view of the illuminated house, which stood in the middle of the green lawn in the centre of the labyrinth.

"Traaaaa!" cried Pete. "We did it!"

"Well, great," gasped Jupiter. "Now would you be kind enough to get off my shoulders?"

"No... I actually kind of like it up here," Pete mocked.

Jupiter crouched down and let Pete get off. With his face distorted in pain he rubbed his shoulders.

"Look, here's another god figure," said Bob, pointing to a naked woman made of white stone who looked at the three visitors with a blissful smile. "Aphrodite," he read on the pedestal.

"The Greek goddess of beauty and love," declared Jupiter. "Depending on the legend, she was either the daughter of Zeus or born out from the foam of the sea."

"The goddess of love!" whispered Pete, took the stone hand and kissed it. "Oh, fair goddess, born of sea foam! Descended from Olympus to enchant us poor, unworthy people with your incomparable beauty! It's an honour to present to you..."

"It's an honour to throw you off my property," suddenly a deep voice sounded behind them.

The three of them whirled around.

On the lawn in front of the house stood a scowl-eyed man with deep black hair. In his hands he held a rifle aimed at The Three Investigators.

7. The Eavesdropper

Pete hurriedly let go of the statue's hand. "I... uh..."

"What are you doing here?"

"Are you Mr Stanley Truman?" Jupiter asked when he got over the first shock.

"What does this concern you? Get out of here!" The man came a few steps towards them. His old, weather-beaten face was half hidden behind a thick black beard.

"If you're Mr Truman, we'd like a word with you. My name is Jupiter Jones."

"I don't care about your name," the man growled. "How dare you trespass on my property?"

"Sorry, sir, we didn't realize you were so hostile to unannounced visitors," Jupiter said.

"Your visit is not only unannounced, but also unwelcome!"

"We just have a few questions," Bob tried his luck.

"Questions? What for?"

"About Edward Truman," Jupiter took over the conversation again. "To the former owner of this house. Your father, I suppose."

"Let me tell you something, boys. I don't know why a few teenage students are taking care of the matter now, but I don't care either. I'm fed up with people who want to squeeze me for my father's alleged missing masterpiece! I will be the devil and make sure that no journalists make a fortune for the story. I know nothing about *Utopia*! Now get out of here!"

"But we don't write for any newspaper," Jupiter tried again. "We are detectives, investigating on behalf of an employee of Wonderworld. May I show you our card?" Even before Mr Truman could say no, the First Investigator pulled out one of their business cards and handed it to him. It said:



Mr Truman took just a quick glance at it and let the card disappear into his shirt pocket. "Detectives!" he snorted contemptuously. "This is rubbish!"

A noise made them take notice. Something rushed nearby, just behind the first row of hedges.

"Who's there?" hissed Truman. No one answered. He turned to The Three Investigators and grimly pulled a face. "Did you bring anyone else with you?"

"No, sir!" Jupiter affirmed. "We—"

Stanley Truman turned around and stomped with big steps towards the hedge behind which he suspected the intruder. Without hesitation, he pushed the barrel of his rifle through

the undergrowth. A startled gasp was heard, then someone ran away. The click of high-heeled shoes was clearly audible.

"Next time I'll shoot!" Truman yelled after the runaway. "Get out of here!" He now returned to the three detectives. "And you too. Now! And tell your companion, I'll let go of the dogs if anyone else strays through the maze again."

"But... but we don't know who it was," Bob assured him.

"I don't care about that. Go on, beat it! I've had it up to here!" He waved his rifle around in no uncertain terms.

"We cannot find our way out through the maze," Pete stammered.

"Then take the road! That way!" With a nod, he pointed toward Beverly Hills. "Get a move on!"

The Three Investigators had no choice and passed Mr Truman at a reasonable distance. He followed them, rifle still at the ready. They circled the white house and reached the long driveway lined by the hedges of the garden maze. Jupiter tried once more to talk to the man, but Truman was silent. At the end of the property was a large wrought-iron gate. Truman unlocked it and the three stepped out. Truman closed the gate and locked it back from the inside.

"Don't come back here!" he yelled after them as they slowly moved away from the house.

It wasn't until they were out of earshot that Pete said, "That was a complete waste of effort."

"A very unpleasant encounter," Jupiter agreed. "Apparently we weren't the first to speak to him about his father. But does that mean he has to come straight out with a rifle?"

"Well, you saw it," Bob said. "There was someone else in the maze. Mr Truman seems to be under regular siege because of the story. Who would have thought a simple article about Josephine Jonas would stir up so much dust?"

"In any case, we can forget about this case," Pete said. "I swear, we're gonna bite our teeth out on this Mr Truman. But my father won't be angry with us if we don't produce results. He probably just wanted us to take a vacation from boredom with this job anyway."

"That sounds like you're already giving up, Pete," Jupiter remarked.

"What else? There were only two tracks—Josephine Jonas and Stanley Truman. Jonas is senile and Truman greets his guests with a rifle," Pete reasoned. "How are we supposed to proceed? Besides, I think Truman is perfectly entitled to scare uninvited visitors off his property. His methods may not have been very good, but we haven't been fair either. We should have called and asked for an appointment."

"Which he would never have given us for sure," Jupiter said.

"Because he's annoyed, right," Pete argued. "What's wrong with that?"

"Okay, that's fine," Jupiter affirmed. "But that still doesn't mean that we have to give up. We'll simply look for a new lead."

"And how is that possible?" Pete asked.

"There are dozens or even hundreds of people involved in a movie production like this. I'm sure there are even more people who were there at the time and can tell us something about *Utopia*. We just have to find them."

"You know the first thing we have to find?" Bob interrupted the discussion. "My car! It's on the other side of the valley at the edge of the forest. That means we have to walk across Beverly Hills to get back. Fantastic!"

“Good morning, Bob! You’re here again? You were here yesterday.”

“Good morning, Mrs Grayson.” Bob closed the steel door behind him and entered the basement archives of the *Los Angeles Times*. In a huge hall, shelves were lined up, all stuffed to the ceiling with old newspaper folders.

This apparent chaos was supervised and managed by Mrs Grayson, who had known The Three Investigators and especially Bob for a long time. Since his father worked at the newspaper, Bob had used the archives for his research work at an early age.

“I’m afraid I didn’t find out enough yesterday,” Bob said.

“Is this about that director and his movie again?”

“Edward Truman, right.”

“Last night, someone else was here for the same thing,” Mrs Grayson said.

Bob paused. “Pardon?”

“Yes, about an hour after you left, a young dark-haired woman with a visitor’s pass came asking for information about this Truman,” Mrs Grayson said.

“With a visitor’s pass? What is that for?” Bob asked.

“Well, this isn’t a public library,” said Mrs Grayson. “You need a visitor’s pass to look around the archives. You can apply for one at the office. You have my good nature to let you and your friends in like this.” She winked at him.

“Is there a name on the visitor’s pass?” Bob asked.

“Yes.”

“Do you happen to remember the name of the woman?”

Mrs Grayson raised one eyebrow. “That’s some very confidential information you want me to share.”

“Well, we’re investigating a case and yesterday we were overheard by someone who is obviously after the same story. It may be the same person who was here in the archives.”

“All right, I’ll make an exception in this case,” Mrs Grayson said. “I know the lady. She comes here often. Tall, slim, long dark hair. She claims to be a student. But I don’t believe her. I once heard she worked for *Vision Weekly*, that trashy tabloid. They have a miserable archive, so the staff often try to sneak into other newspapers to get information. Unfortunately, they usually succeed. This dark-haired girl is so young that she can pass off for a student without any problems.”

“Do you know her name?” urged Bob. If his suspicions were correct and the alleged student was identical to the stranger behind the hedge, then perhaps they could reveal her name to Mr Truman and gain his trust.

“Hold on, I’ll check. I always make a note of the visitors.” Mrs Grayson went to her big desk near the door. She opened a small notebook. “Here it is—Michelle Shoemaker. But I honestly don’t think that’s her real name.”

“Why not?”

“Because we might check on her.”

Bob took down the name. “All right. I’m gonna go and look for something.”

“Go ahead. You know your way around.”

Bob thanked her and made his way to the shelves.

A new lead, Jupiter had said. He made it easy for himself. The *Utopia* case was decades ago, how could he find anyone else involved at that time? Bob decided to go back to the articles he had found the day before. Maybe he had missed something.

It was a long morning for him. But around noon, he had a small list of names of people who had worked on the production of *Utopia*. Exhausted, he closed the last huge folder of old newspapers and put it back on the shelf.

“Now I just have to find these people,” he murmured. The door to the archive was opened. A young woman with long black hair came in and walked toward Mrs Grayson’s desk.

The archivist looked up and said out louder than necessary: “Good morning, Miss Shoemaker. Did you forget something yesterday?”

8. The Man in the Mask

Bob winced and instinctively hid behind a shelf. Mrs Grayson and the stranger talked to each other, but he was too far away to hear. Only Mrs Grayson's greeting had been loud enough to warn Bob.

A few moments later, Michelle Shoemaker turned around and walked down the main corridor of the basement in loud clattering shoes—heading straight for Bob! He backed away and pushed himself between the shelves to avoid being seen. Finally, she stopped exactly at the shelves where Bob had been earlier. She pulled out a folder and sat down at one of the little tables that were there. Luckily she had her back to him, so Bob could disappear unseen.

"Thanks for the warning!" he whispered as he stood in front of Mrs Grayson's desk. "So this is the mysterious Miss Shoemaker."

She nodded.

"I will best wait for her outside and then try to find out where she comes from and who she works for," Bob whispered. "Thank you very much."

"You're welcome," whispered Mrs Grayson. "But don't forget to tell me how the story ended."

Bob raised his hand to say goodbye and left the archives of *Los Angeles Times*.

Outside the newspaper building, he looked around uncertainly. He had to stick around to keep tabs on Miss Shoemaker. However, if she was looking for the same information as he was, it could be hours before she came out. Also, Bob had some phone calls to make.

There was a telephone booth near the parking lot. Bob walked towards it. From here he had a good view of the entrance of the building.

"Perfect," he said to himself, pulled out his notebook, entered the booth and made the first call.

"What's keeping Bob?" Pete asked. "Maybe we really should have helped him. He's responsible for research and records, but that doesn't automatically mean he has to do all the work alone."

"He'll be all right." Jupiter was confident. Although they had an appointment at Headquarters half an hour ago, if Bob was late, he was sure to have a good reason.

Once again Pete peered outside through 'See-All'—a periscope they constructed from stovepipes and mirrors that protruded from the roof of the trailer.

"Speak of the devil! Here he comes!" Pete watched as Bob's Beetle rolled onto the salvage yard. A little later, the door was opened.

"My goodness, are you people insane?" moaned Bob.

"What is it?" Jupe asked.

"It's scorching hot in here! The door stays open for now," Bob insisted. "Hey, Pete, you're starting to get colour."

The Second Investigator frowned. "Colour?"

"Your face. The red areas are turning blue now, and here and there a bit of green and yellow is shining through."

"Can you give me a break with this?" he asked, annoyed. "Better tell us what you found out."

Bob fell exhausted into an armchair. "A lot. And nothing. I'll start with the lot. I met our opponent today."

"Opponent?" Jupiter remarked. "I didn't even know we had one."

"Neither did I until Mrs Grayson told me about a woman who searched the archives for the exact same information I did." Bob told them about his encounter with Miss Shoemaker.

"And what makes you think it was she who was listening behind the hedge last night?"

"The shoes. The woman from yesterday was wearing loud clattering shoes. So was Miss Shoemaker."

"This is far from a proof," Jupiter interjected.

"I'm not saying that. But it's striking."

"All right. Have you been able to track her?" Jupe added.

Bob lowered his head. "Unfortunately, no. I just got off the phone and for a moment I let the entrance out of my sight. When I looked again, she was already getting into her car. I rushed right out, but by the time I got in the Beetle, she was long gone."

"This shouldn't have happened," said the First Investigator.

"It certainly wouldn't have happened if you had helped me," Bob defended himself.

"Next time, don't talk yourselves out of salvage yard work and lawn mowing."

Now Jupiter and Pete looked down on the ground. "Next time we'll share the job," Jupiter relented. "What kind of results did your phone calls bring?"

"Sadly, the exact one I had feared. I was able to find out about a dozen people who worked on *Utopia* back then—cameramen, actors and so on. But apart from Josephine Jonas, they are all dead. She was one of the youngest then."

"Everyone?" echo Pete. "Are you sure there's no one still living in a nursing home somewhere?"

Bob shook his head. "Of most of them, I've been able to reach the children, and they are now over sixty."

"Then Josephine Jonas is indeed the only one left," Jupiter noted.

"But she's so confused that you might as well ask a fortune-teller to find out something about the movie," Pete interjected. "Was that it?"

"Not quite yet. Because with all the frustration, there was also a very enlightening conversation. I talked to Ken Stark's daughter."

"Who is Ken Stark?" Pete asked.

"Ken Stark was one of the actors in *Utopia*," Bob continued. "And now it gets interesting—he died while working on the movie. And his daughter claims that that was the real reason why shooting was stopped."

"Well, this is exciting."

"Right? Stark was only forty at the time and he died in a car accident driving home from the set. The movie was almost finished, but the most important key scenes in which he was in were not done. So there were only two options for the crew—either they redo all the scenes involving Stark with another actor, or they stopped shooting."

"Obviously, they chose the latter."

"Right," Bob confirmed. "*Utopia* was an elaborate science fiction movie with lots of huge studio sets. When Stark died, however, most of it had already been torn down to make room in the movie studios. So everything would have had to be rebuilt and that would have been too expensive."

"Sounds logical," Pete thought. "But it contradicts the other stories we've heard. Wasn't it said that Truman thought his movie was bad?"

"Or it had never been filmed for a single second?" Jupiter added and pinched his lower lip thoughtfully. "Very strange."

"It gets weirder," Bob promised. "Because Stark's daughter lied."

"Huh?" Pete remarked.

"In an old article, I found a cast list. Ken Stark was in *Utopia*, but he only had one small part."

"That means nothing," Jupe said. "The role might have been tiny, but it could still be very important."

"Possibly. But he played an alien from the tenth planet."

"So what?" Pete asked.

"It was a costume role. Stark wore an alien mask the whole time. And it was a non-speaking role because the aliens communicated with each other through strange sibilants, that were later subtitled. So it wouldn't have been a problem to retain the shot scenes and put another actor into the costume for the rest of the movie."

"Well," Pete sighed. "I guess Stark's daughter overestimated her father's role in this."

But Jupiter shook his head. "I don't see things that simple. Do you notice anything? We hear from different sources the different reasons why *Utopia* never came out. It's almost as if someone had deliberately tried to confuse things back then. One thing's for sure—*Utopia* is surrounded by secrets, just like Miss Jonas said. And I'm dying to know what that secret is."

"Perhaps we should pay Miss Jonas another visit," Bob thought. "Perhaps she'll tell us a little more if we have the time and we don't have to hide from the nurses."

"Must we? What are we going to fix for her?" Pete asked. "Seriously, whatever she says, you can't be sure it's true anyway."

"You got a better idea?" Bob asked.

"No," he admitted. "In any case, we can forget about Stanley Truman. I won't want to go back there!"

"Too bad," mumbled Jupiter. "He is the only one who can help us."

The phone rang.

"I hope it's not my father who wants to hear some results," Pete moaned. "I'm afraid there's not much we can offer him."

Jupiter switched on the loudspeaker and picked up. "The Three Investigators. Jupiter Jones speaking."

Someone cleared his throat. "Jupiter? This is Stanley Truman."

The First Investigator began to cough. "Mr Truman?"

"You're probably wondering why I'm calling you, aren't you?"

"You... could say that." Jupiter gave his friends questioning looks, but even Bob and Pete could only shrug their shoulders.

"I looked at your business card last night and remembered what you said—that you work for Wonderworld."

"Not on behalf of the company," corrected Jupiter, "but—"

"On behalf of an employee, exactly. Mr Crenshaw, Pete's father." Mr Truman said.

Jupiter's eyes grew larger and larger.

"I have enquired about you. The fact is, I could really use some detectives right now. I just had to make sure beforehand that you really don't work for a newspaper or a radio or TV station. Mr Crenshaw has explained to me that you're serious investigators. Although, given

your age, I find that hard to believe. But he strongly suggested that I try you, so thank him for that.”

“I am not yet convinced that there is a reason to say thank you,” replied Jupiter coolly. He disliked the unfriendly manner of Mr Truman. If he wanted something from them, he should ask them nicely.

“What do you mean? You’re not gonna take my job?” Mr Truman asked.

“So far you have not even told us what this is all about,” Jupiter remarked.

“I thought that was clear! About the movie, of course! I want you to find it. If you can find it, I’ll pay you a thousand dollars.”

“A thousand—” Pete gasped, but Jupiter silenced him angrily with a gesture.

“We don’t care about money,” replied Jupiter. “Normally we don’t take fees.”

“Normally,” Pete quietly repeated.

“All right, suit yourselves,” Mr Truman said. “Will you take the job?”

“Well, actually, we already work for Mr Crenshaw,” Jupiter replied.

“If you’re looking for the film stock on behalf of Mr Crenshaw, there’s no way around me anyway. Edward Truman was my father, so his entire estate is mine. And if you find *Utopia*, you can’t just hand it over to anyone.”

“All right. Then I don’t see the difference.”

“The difference is, I will allow you to search my property. Because the film stock is here.”

“It’s there? How do you know that?”

“From my father.”

Jupiter once took a deep breath and tried to put his thoughts in order. “Mr Truman, what do you say we go straight to your house and discuss the case in detail? I think that would be more appropriate than a phone call. And then we’ll decide whether to investigate on your behalf or not.”

“Then you’ll decide? You mean I give you all the information I have, and you end up choosing Mr Crenshaw? No, no, boys, it doesn’t work like that!” he said angrily. “Either you accept now or you can forget the whole story—and the thousand dollars on top.”

“We’re not for sale, Mr Truman,” replied Jupiter irritably. It was about time he got the upper hand in this conversation. He didn’t like the way Truman talked to him.

Jupiter decided on the surprise tactic. “We will come to your place this afternoon, then we can talk about everything else. Goodbye!” Jupiter hung up even before Truman could answer.

“He’ll call right back, I bet.” Bob said... but the phone did not ring.

“He’s out of his mind,” Pete got excited. “Who does he think he is? First he threatens us with his stupid rifle and now he thinks he can boss us around. I’m going to tell him something.”

“You’ll leave that alone, Pete!” warned Jupiter. “When we visit him later, you better let me do the talking. Otherwise, we’ll probably be yelling at each other within five minutes. This is a matter of diplomacy.”

“Why don’t you tell that to Mr Truman?” Pete asked.

“He will very quickly realize that we set the conditions if we work for him,” Jupiter promised.

“I wouldn’t be so sure,” Bob doubted. “Maybe we shouldn’t go there at all. I can think of more fun things to do than to investigate for some idiot.”

“Me too.” Jupiter smiled conspiratorially. “But it’s the only way to get to him.”

9. Change of Heart

From the street the labyrinth was not visible at all. A high fence shielded the property, behind it was a lawn leading to a high hedge that blocked any further view. Nobody could have guessed that behind this first hedge thousands more followed, unless they had already seen the valley from the other side. The gate through which they had been thrown out the night before was closed.

Bob steered his car towards it and Jupiter got out and went to the intercom. "Now I'm curious," he murmured and pressed the bell.

"Yes?" growled an unfriendly voice.

"This is Jupiter Jones. We—" A crack in the line interrupted him. Truman had hung up. "A warm welcome," Jupiter thought.

"I guess he changed his mind," Pete said quickly. "I'm not surprised. Let's get out of here. I would have much rather gone swimming than come here, of all places." But the gate swung up almost silently and opened the way to the property.

The Second Investigator pulled a face. "What a bummer. He didn't change his mind."

Jupiter got back into the car and Bob slowly drove past the hedge towards the house. There was no parking space, just a green lawn next to the hedge. Bob stopped and they got out. The front door was under a roof supported by columns. Next to one of the columns was another statue—a man wearing a winged helmet and shoes and holding a staff in his hand.

"This area is populated by gods," Pete remarked.

Jupiter started to answer, but the Second Investigator raised his hand defensively.

"Please, Juve, spare us your explanations. I don't care what this guy's name is or whose son he is."

Someone came around the corner from the house. "This is Hermes, the Greek messenger of the gods, son of Zeus and the goddess Maia."

"Good afternoon, Mr Truman," Jupiter greeted the host. "I must point it out—in Greek mythology, Maia is not a goddess, but a nymph. She was one of the mountain nymphs, also called Oreads."

Stanley Truman stopped in surprise. For a moment his face, half hidden under the thick black beard, remained motionless but then a smile played around his lips. "Well done. Mr Crenshaw did prepare me for this."

"What did he prepare you?" Jupiter asked.

"He told me that The Three Investigators have solved many cases, which is not least due to the clever mind of First Investigator, Jupiter Jones. Well, that seems to be the case as I can see. Let's see if you're right about the rest." He stepped up to them and reached out his hand. "Under normal circumstances I would show you the maze now, but you already know it."

Jupiter noticed that the smile of the host was not only meant to be friendly.

"So we may as well go inside and discuss the matter at hand." He opened the door and stepped inside. The Three Investigators followed him. The entrance was followed by a long, wide corridor from which several doors branched off.

"What got into him?" Pete whispered to Bob.

Bob shrugged his shoulders. "I think he was impressed with Jupe's knowledge. Perhaps his mood has eased."

Pete pulled a face. "I still don't trust him."

At the end of the corridor, a spiral staircase led to the upper floor, but Mr Truman passed it on his way to the last room. It was a study, stuffed to the ceiling with files. There was a dark desk on one side and a massive brown leather suite on the other. Above the fireplace hung framed photos, but they lay in the shade. The curtains on the windows let in only a narrow strip of sunlight, but Mr Truman made no attempt to open them. He didn't turn on a lamp either. The low light seemed to be enough for him. He asked The Three Investigators to sit down.

Pete almost sank into the heavy cold sofa. He would have liked best to open the window and sit at the windowsill. Seldom had he felt so uncomfortable in a room. It smelled like old smoke, musty, kind of boring. Despite the heat outside it was cold—cold and oppressive—in the room.

"I keep the window closed on purpose," Truman said, as if he had guessed Pete's thoughts. "Otherwise, the heat will get in." He reached for a small wooden box that stood beside a marble ashtray on the table and pulled out a thick cigar. Then he snapped the top off, picked up a lighter and puffed on the cigar. The smoke painted bizarre patterns in the air.

"So here we are," Jupiter tried to get the conversation going.

"You might expect me to apologize to you for my behaviour," surmised Mr Truman.

"It was your right to chase us off your property," Jupiter relented. "After all, we were walking through the maze without permission."

"That as well. But I was talking about my behaviour on the phone. Well, I'm not gonna apologize. It was necessary to speak to you like that, Jupiter."

The First Investigator looked at him with irritation. "I don't understand."

"I'm disappointed. I'd hoped you'd see what I was getting at."

"No. For the moment you are speaking in riddles," Jupiter remarked. "And that doesn't help our cooperation."

Truman blew a cloud of smoke into the air and smiled.

"See, I like that. You say straight out what you don't like. You have an opinion. You don't let it get you down. I hate sneaky people! I can't work with people like that."

"You mean, you tested us on the phone this afternoon?"

"Exactly. If you hadn't reacted so confidently, I would have looked for other detectives."

"Jupe has more than enough self-confidence," Pete confirmed. "It's enough for the three of us."

"I am glad you chose us," Jupiter said in conclusion, returning Mr Truman's smile for the first time. "You won't regret it. Perhaps you will explain the whole case to us again so that we can get a clearer idea of what exactly it is all about. So far, we have found more questions than answers in our investigation."

"All right, although there's not much to explain," Mr Truman said. "It began with the article about Josephine Jonas, as you probably know."

Jupiter nodded.

"Since then, I have been besieged by journalists. They all want to find the missing film stock of *Utopia*, the supposed masterpiece of my supposedly brilliant father." Bitterness was in his voice.

"Although no one seems to know for sure if this film stock actually exists," Bob added.

"It exists. At least parts of it. I was still very young when my father worked on this movie, so I can't remember it, but later he told me about it. It was a large-scale project with a

lot of money invested in it. It was a movie that was to eclipse everything that had ever been done before in terms of effort and technique.”

“What went wrong?” Bob asked.

“Everything,” Mr Truman explained. “There were contracts that required my father to stick to a certain script. However, this script was a disaster, full of logical errors and miserable dialogues, so my father changed a lot during the filming, so that the movie corresponded to the vision he had had from the beginning. Eventually the screenwriter found out and protested. Behind the scenes at the movie company, there was a huge riot, two camps formed and everyone fought against everyone else.

“My father was forced to stick to the script. Only extremely reluctantly did he continue with the work until he finally threatened to drop everything if he wasn’t allowed to make the movie the way he had planned it from the beginning. All this led to the studio finally deciding to put the production on hold until the legal issues were resolved.”

“But they were never resolved,” Jupiter suspected.

“Right. The various parties didn’t come to an agreement, the lawsuits swallowed enormous sums of money and in the end the movie was abandoned so as not to cause more damage.”

Jupiter pinched his lower lip. “Why haven’t we found out anything about this story? The newspapers spoke of a thousand other things, but not of a lawsuit.”

“The studio’s reputation wasn’t exactly the best at the time. Everyone involved was wary of making the matter public. Had the scandal become public, it would have meant the final shutdown of the studio.”

Bob sighed. “This may not be the secret that we thought it was, but it sounds logical. What exactly do you want from us now?”

“That you find the film stock before anyone else does. If it falls into the wrong hands, it may be released. My father would roll over in his grave if that happened. He hated *Utopia* and kept telling me it should never be shown. I want to fulfil his wish.”

“I still don’t quite understand it. The film stock still exists?” Pete asked.

“Yes. The material that was ready was edited by my father himself into a rough cut and then hidden.”

“But if he was so unhappy, why didn’t he just destroy it?” Pete asked.

Again, Mr Truman released a cloud of smoke. By this time, the study was quite smoky.

“He was a visionary. Even if the story of the movie didn’t suit him, the basic idea, the costume designs, the set design, all came from him. He put so much time and energy into this project, he obviously didn’t want to just destroy it.”

“So he hid the rough cut, but nobody knows where,” Pete surmised. “And that’s why you need our help.”

“Right, Pete. Your father assured me you are true masters at retrieving lost things.”

“If it is not exactly a lost cat or a misplaced amulet, that is probably true,” Pete admitted openly.

“On the phone you said that the film stock was hidden here,” Bob recalled. “How come you haven’t found it yourself yet? It’s not such a big house after all.”

Mr Truman ran his hand through his thick beard. “I don’t know if it’s really in the house. It could be hidden in the garden.”

“In the garden?” cried Pete, startled. “You mean in the maze? Are we going to dig it up? It’ll take us months to dig it up.”

A sneering smile fell on Truman’s face. “That’s your problem. After all, you are the masters at retrieving lost things.”

“There is certainly little point in indiscriminately digging holes in the labyrinth,” Jupiter said objectively. “Didn’t your father give you a clue where he hid the film stock? He must have talked to you about it.”

“He talked to me occasionally about *Utopia* and told me that he had hidden the film stock in a secret place. My father had a weakness for puzzles and secrets. But he did not tell me exactly where this hiding place was. It wasn’t until he was dying that he told me. He wanted me to know where the film stock is. But he was very sick and already mentally confused. He told me nothing concrete. It sounded more like another mystery.”

“What exactly did he say?”

Truman laughed. “My father has been dead for nearly 40 years. I was barely 30 then. It was a long time ago. I can’t remember exactly what he said. But he kept talking about the labyrinth. He had designed and built it himself. No, I’ll show you in a minute.”

He put the cigar in the ashtray and got up out of the leather chair. “Come along!”

Jupiter took a look at the still glowing cigar.

“Don’t worry, it’ll go out on its own,” Truman guessed his thoughts.

“Whatever you say, Mr Truman,” Jupe said.

They followed Mr Truman down the hall to the spiral staircase. The host climbed the creaky stairs. As soon as they went up past the ceiling, it became dark.

“I’m sorry, the light switch is at the top.” After two more turns, the stairs ended. The Three Investigators carefully groped their way up.

“Where are we?” Pete asked and shrugged in surprise when he heard the echo of his voice. “Wow, sounds like a big room.”

“It is,” came Truman’s voice. Something clicked and suddenly a beam of light shot down from above. The sun shone through a skylight that opened automatically. They were dazzled for a moment, but as their eyes got used to the bright light, they saw a huge hall in front of them.

The Three Investigators held their breath. They had never seen anything like it.

10. The Planetarium

“My goodness,” Pete whispered. “This... this is huge!”

“Indeed,” Jupiter said soundlessly.

The hall was in the large, circular dome, which The Three Investigators had already noticed from outside. The floor was decorated with tiles in a bizarre pattern, the walls were bare. Apart from the skylight, which was now completely opened, there were no windows.

In the middle of the hall was a gigantic mechanical planetarium. A broad pole made of reddish-brown metal rose almost four metres high from the floor. Various thick and long rods were attached to it, which protruded horizontally into the hall in all directions. The pole looked like a strangely shaped tree. At the end of the poles were small and large spheres—resembling the planets, painted in great detail, suspended like a globe. Some of the model planets had further rod branches to which the moons were attached.

The planetarium measured a good fifteen metres in diameter and thus filled almost the entire hall. In a niche, a small metal staircase led to a platform under the skylight. On it was a large telescope with which one could see into the sky through the skylight opening.

“Impressive, isn’t it?” asked Mr Truman with a smile and slowly stepped between the planets, which were at about head height, into the middle of the hall. “A model of our solar system with all the planets and moons. My father led two lives. One was movie-making, the other was this...”

“Astronomy was his passion. Even when I was very small, I always went with him to the Griffith Observatory. His great dream was to have his own planetarium, not the kind you see today—with spots of light projected onto the ceiling—but an old, mechanical one. So he designed one and had it built.”

“Does it work?” asked Jupiter, fascinated.

“Of course.”

“Work?” Pete asked. “What do you mean by ‘work’, Juve? This thing is just a model. Is there anything else it can do?”

“I’ll show you,” replied Mr Truman in Jupiter’s place. “But watch your heads!” He crouched down and flipped a switch on the centre axis of the frame.

Something buzzed. And suddenly the planets started jerking. After a few seconds, they had reached their normal speed and were circling around an imaginary sun, the inner planets quite fast, the outer ones much slower. Also the moons whirled around their planets.

“Look out!” cried Bob and pushed Jupiter aside. One of the outer celestial bodies had unerringly approached his head without the First Investigator noticing. Now it raced past him by a hair’s breadth.

“Thank you!” gasped Jupiter. “This is life-threatening!”

“I told you, watch your heads!”

The Three Investigators took a few steps back so that they were safe from the planets and watched the spectacle with fascination.

“How does it work?” Jupiter asked with interest.

“There is a motor mounted in the central axle. The bars are like the hands on a clock, and there are sophisticated mechanisms hidden in them.”

"It must have taken forever to work that out exactly," Bob remarked.

"It did. Especially since the duration of the individual rounds in relation to each other corresponds exactly to reality. If I were to adjust the planetarium so slowly that the model of the Earth takes exactly one year to complete one cycle, then the Saturn model would take about twenty-nine years for one cycle—just like in reality. The speed of the individual moons is also correct. Only the proportions and the distances of the planets to each other are exaggerated. If this had been reproduced realistically, the model of the Earth would not even be as big as a ping-pong ball compared to Jupiter, for example. And if the distance between Earth and Mars were correct, Neptune would already be out in the garden somewhere."

"The path of the planets is not exactly circular but elliptical," Jupiter noted. "But I guess that wasn't technically feasible. Still, it's a very impressive piece of mechanics."

"It's sheer madness if you ask me," said Pete, who could not understand Jupiter's lack of enthusiasm. "Just look at that planet there! There are at least twenty mini spheres around it! All tiny moons."

The model that Pete was talking about was whirring past them slowly and was buzzing around them like a swarm of flies.

"Twenty-three," corrected Jupiter. "That is Saturn. I say, it's very impressive."

"Astronomy was very popular in the 1930s. That was when Pluto had just been discovered. It was a very exciting time."

"I guess that's what led your father to tackle *Utopia*," Bob surmised. "The movie is about an alien race that lives on the tenth planet."

"Right. When Pluto was discovered, it was assumed that there was another planet behind it. This idea inspired my father to write the story of *Utopia*."

"Planet X," Jupe said. "To this day, we are not sure if it actually exists. So small and so far out in space that no telescope has been able to detect it."

Mr Truman switched off the planetarium. The buzzing faded and the spinning of the spheres slowed until they finally stopped. Then he walked from Mercury to Mars, towards them.

"So that was the other thing your father spoke of before he died?" Jupiter suspected. "The planetarium?"

Truman nodded. "I always knew it was very important to him... but I wondered at the time if he was talking about it in the context of the movie."

"And you really can't remember exactly what he said?" Jupiter asked.

"No. It's been too long."

"I assume you've examined the planetarium?" Jupiter enquired.

"Well, I didn't take it apart, if that's what you mean." He lowered his voice, warning. "And I advise you not to do that either. It's a masterpiece. If you break it, even the thousand dollars I save from your free help won't be enough to fix it."

Jupiter wanted to reply, but at that moment the doorbell rang downstairs.

"I'll be right back," said Mr Truman curtly and climbed down the spiral staircase.

"As if we'd be so stupid as to take that thing apart," whispered Pete when he was out of earshot. "Although it's a good hiding place, of course. The film stock could be hidden in one of the model planets."

"Do you think it's that easy?" Bob doubted, walked towards one of the planets and knocked lightly on it. "Hollow," he said. "But just as empty."

Within moments, they had examined all the planet models, but none seemed to contain anything.

"That would really have been too easy," Jupiter agreed. "But we'll find the film stock."

“How?” asked Pete. “It’s all a mystery to me. Labyrinth, planetarium, *Utopia*. How can it all fit together?”

Jupiter was optimistic. “We’ll soon find out. What do you think of Mr Truman?”

Pete pulled a wry face and said softly: “I can’t quite see through him. I don’t like him very much.”

“As long as he lets us do our work, we don’t care about the rest,” Bob thought.

Jupiter nodded. “So we accept the assignment.” It wasn’t a question, it was a statement. “I suggest we say goodbye to Truman right now and go back to Headquarters and discuss how to proceed.”

Steps on the spiral staircase announced Mr Truman’s return.

“Bloody journalists!” he cursed before he even got to the top. “That woman again! She just won’t let go. I have another job for you—keep those bloodhounds away from me.”

“I’m afraid we are not qualified for that,” replied Jupiter. “Who was that woman?”

“She’s bothered me a few times already. A young, dark-haired girl like that.”

Jupiter’s ears were wide open. “And what did she want?”

“I didn’t even let her get a word in. A brazen person! She actually climbed over the gate and was already standing in front of my door! Just fiddling with Hermes as if the statue belonged to her. I chased her away, but she won’t be the last. It’ll be a few weeks before this whole thing blows over. It’s time to find the film stock before someone else does.”

Stanley Truman puffed angrily, then continued a little more calmly: “With Hermes I can think of something else. My father mentioned not only the planetarium and the labyrinth, but also the statues of the gods. Don’t ask me in what context, but the statues were as important to him as the planetarium.”

“How many are there altogether?” Jupiter wanted to know.

“Eight pieces. Two around the front of the house, the rest are in the maze somewhere.”

“Is there any special reason for this? That the others are standing in the maze, I mean?” Bob asked. “You don’t see them like that very often.”

Mr Truman shrugged. “My father put them up back then. I don’t know what he was thinking. I tried to get them out of the labyrinth once, but they’re firmly anchored in the ground. So I left them as they are. Anyway, eight gods in front of the house would have seemed a bit silly. Now I am happy when I pass each statue during a walk through the maze.”

Jupiter pinched his lower lip. “We have to go now.”

Mr Truman frowned. “You have to go? What does that mean? You haven’t done anything yet! Is this your idea of highly-regarded detective work—interrogate the client and then go home?”

“Let that be our concern,” replied Jupiter irritably. “We know how to do our job.”

“What are you going to do? The film stock is hidden here, not at your place in Rocky Beach!”

“There are other ways to look for hidden things,” the First Investigator replied confidently. “I promise you we’ll have some results by tomorrow.”

It was clear that Stanley Truman wasn’t convinced. “Don’t think that you can be sloppy just because you won’t take my money... because then I’ll get real detectives.”

“Goodbye, Mr Truman.” Jupiter passed him and climbed down the stairs, followed by Bob and Pete.

Grumpily, Truman opened the front door for them and said goodbye, “I really hope you didn’t talk too much, boy!”

“We’ll get back to you tomorrow,” Jupiter ignored the remark objectively.

As Bob slowly drove down the driveway, Pete said, "I think if we can't offer him anything tomorrow, he'll throw us out. Well, it wouldn't be so bad."

"I think you underestimate Jupiter Jones," Bob said as he turned into the street. "Right, Jupe? I don't think you would have made a statement like that if you didn't have a plan. What kind of results are you going to show Truman tomorrow?"

"That remains to be seen. Depends entirely on what Josephine Jonas tells us."

"Josephine Jonas?" Pete asked, surprised. "Why is that?"

"Because we're going to pay her a visit."

"What's the point? She already told us everything," Pete remarked. "And that was not very productive. In fact, it was a lot of absurd stuff."

"Possibly. But when Truman was talking about the statues of the gods, I remembered something she said. Do you remember? She said: 'Ask the gods!'"

11. Plan B

“What do you think about the reporter showing up,” Pete asked when they were on their way to the nursing home. “Are you thinking what I’m thinking?”

“That it was Michelle Shoemaker?” Jupiter replied. “I have no idea.”

“It was Michelle Shoemaker,” Bob was convinced. “One hundred percent.”

“How can you be so sure?” Pete asked.

“Don’t turn around because she’s right behind us,” Bob replied.

“What?” Pete exclaimed.

“Don’t look back! She’ll know we saw her,” Bob said. “A red Chrysler. She’s been following us for a while. In fact, she’s been following us since we left Mr Truman’s house.”

“And why didn’t you say anything?” Jupiter asked.

“I wasn’t quite sure. But earlier at the traffic lights, I saw the driver from the rear-view mirror. It was the woman I met at the archive basement—Michelle Shoemaker. She climbed onto Stanley Truman’s property, got kicked out and waited in front of the driveway because she wanted to know who was driving a yellow Beetle and visiting Mr Truman,” Bob put together a theory.

Pete, who was sitting in the passenger seat, bent over and took a look in the right-hand side mirror. “And now what? Can you lose her?”

“You’re joking. With the Beetle?” Bob remarked. “Trust me, I can’t even outrun a snail.”

“If this Michelle Shoemaker is so persistent, I suppose it was she who visited Miss Jonas at the home and disturbed her,” Jupiter suspected. “That would mean that she already knows the nursing home. So we cannot reveal anything she does not already know. I suggest we act as if we hadn’t noticed her and go to Miss Jonas’s home as planned.”

“Then what?” Pete asked.

“If she still follows us after that, Plan B comes into effect,” the First Investigator mysteriously hinted. Bob and Pete knew that they now had no chance to find out more about Jupiter’s plans. If he didn’t tell them immediately what he was up to, there was no way they could get it out of him.

Ten minutes later, they reached the ugly concrete block. Bob immediately drove into the backyard. He looked in his rear-view mirror and saw that Miss Shoemaker wasn’t following them. She parked the car by the side of the road but never got out.

This time no truck was unloading food, but the steel door at the loading ramp was unlocked and so The Three Investigators were on the right floor within minutes.

Jupiter knocked on the door.

“Come in,” Miss Jonas’s voice came from the room.

The Three Investigators entered the room. Miss Jonas was sitting in her armchair with a crossword puzzle on her lap. In one hand, she was holding a pencil, with the other she had just taken off her reading glasses.

“Is it dinner again?” she asked confusedly when she saw the three boys. “But I’m not hungry yet, Mister!”

“No, Miss Jonas, not dinner,” Jupiter said calmly. “Do you remember us? We were here once before yesterday.”

She smiled. "Sure did! You come here every day to make me eat, don't you? But why are there three of you today? Oh, I see, the boys are in training, right?" She turned to Bob and Pete.

"Don't worry, getting an old lady to eat is not too difficult. After all, I'm nowhere near as frail as the rest of them." As if to prove it, she put down the magazine, picked up her cane and lifted herself up. "Well, let's go, but I'm only having dessert."

"Please stay seated," Bob asked. "We are not here to take you to dinner. We are not part of the nursing staff."

She frowned, making her face even more wrinkled. "No? Then you have no business here!"

"But we've been here before and talked to you," Pete tried. "Yesterday! Don't you remember?"

"Talked to me? Talked to me about what?"

"About your movies," Jupiter said. "About Edward Truman. About *Utopia*."

Insecurity flickered in her eyes, but then she defiantly said: "*Utopia*? I don't know it."

"You told us about it yesterday," Jupiter reminded her. "It was the last movie you made with Edward Truman. You spoke of a secret."

"You know about that?" she asked astonished.

"Yes," Jupiter lied. "But we would like to know more. For example, what is it about the gods?"

"Have I said anything about the gods?" she asked in surprise.

Jupiter nodded.

"Then you already know everything," she said.

"Not exactly. You said the gods knew the secret and we should ask them. What did you mean by that? How are we supposed to do that?"

"You're not supposed to do anything," she suddenly nagged angrily. "Leave me alone! I won't tell you anything! It's a secret! I promised Edward."

"What did you promise Edward?" Bob went into it.

"That I will never tell anyone anything. The only ones who know are the gods, and I intend to keep it that way," Miss Jonas affirmed.

"Are you referring to the statues in Edward Truman's maze?" Pete asked.

"The gods in the garden, the gods in the sky, they all know the secret." She frowned again. "How do you know all this?"

Pete shrugged. "We just know. What's with the statues? Is there something hidden in them?"

Miss Jonas pulled a face. "Leave me alone! I've told you too much already! If Edward knew, he'd turn over in his grave! I want my dessert now!"

"There was not much to get out of her," Pete said disappointedly when they went down the staircase. "I expected more."

"At least now we know we're on the right track with the statues. We will take a close look at them first thing tomorrow," Jupiter decided. "Truman said that his father had the statues set up and firmly anchored. I don't think that this is a coincidence. He wanted to prevent his son from perhaps selling them one day without knowing what they were about."

They stepped out the steel door and walked across the yard to Bob's car. "Now I wonder if Miss Shoemaker is still waiting for us. What's Plan B, Jupe?"

"Just wait!"

They got in and drove back to the road via the backyard. Bob hadn't got far yet, and the journalist's red Chrysler was already behind them. "There she is again! She's not particularly adept at following, I must say. Even a blind man could see that!"

"All the better," claimed Jupiter. "For then she may not even notice if she herself is being followed. That's my plan. We'll go to Pete's place and drop him off at home, then we'll go to Headquarters."

"Then what?"

"Miss Shoemaker seems to have a keen interest in who we are and where we live. But she probably won't be following us around all day. Eventually she'll go home, and then it'll be your turn, Pete! Because when we drop you off, you'll be in your MG... and go after her ourselves. Then we'll know who this mysterious person is and where she lives."

"Good idea," the Second Investigator thought. "Trust me—she won't know I'm on her tail."

Five minutes later, they had reached the house of Pete's parents. He got out, said goodbye loudly and with big gestures to his friends and went into the house. But he did not close the door completely, but peered through a crack into the street.

"What are you doing, Pete?"

The Second Investigator flinched. "Oh, it's you, Mum. I, uh... I need to follow someone."

"Follow someone? If I saw it correctly from the window, it was Bob and Jupiter who brought you home, wasn't it? Are you already tailing each other to keep practising?" She smiled amused.

"No, we—" Pete faltered. The red Chrysler just drove past the house. "We are in the middle of an investigation. I have to leave right away." He swung open the door and rushed out.

"But what about dinner?" Mrs Crenshaw yelled after him.

"I'm eating at Jupe's! Can be later!" Before his mother could object, Pete dashed to his car, jumped in and started.

At the next intersection, Bob's Beetle came into view, followed by the red Chrysler. They drove towards Headquarters, as they had agreed. It was only a few minutes by car. Once there, the Beetle rolled into the salvage yard, the pursuer drove a bit further and parked on the street. Pete, who had kept a generous distance, also stopped and waited.

Michelle Shoemaker got out and slowly walked towards the large entrance gate to The Jones Salvage Yard. Her high heels rattled so loudly that Pete could hear them twenty metres away. The young woman took a look at the salvage yard, stopped undecidedly for a moment, then turned around and went back to her car.

Pete resumed his pursuit. Michelle went once across Rocky Beach towards the west. She drove out of the town onto the coastal road. The traffic was just heavy enough for Pete to keep a distance behind Miss Shoemaker without her noticing him. The Second Investigator took an unsteady look at the fuel gauge, but he had no idea how long the journey would take. If he had to refuel on the way, he would lose the journalist.

Pete was lucky. After a while, they reached the small coastal town of Las Flores. Here they turned off, drove a little further through the town and finally stopped in front of a small house in a quiet residential area. Pete drove on and looked for a parking space behind a truck so that he wouldn't be seen. He got out and looked around the truck. Michelle Shoemaker just unlocked the door and disappeared into the house.

Apart from a few children playing in the distance, the street was deserted. Somewhere a lawn mower was humming. Pete headed for the house and, as he passed by, looked at the

name sign on the street mailbox—‘Shoemaker’.

“That’s really her name,” muttered Pete. He looked around once to make sure, then jumped over the low hedge that lined the small front garden, and pushed his way along the wall of the house to the back of the building so as not to be seen from the street. Now he stood in a small garden overgrown with weeds, to which a terrace led. Pete was looking for open windows, but Michelle Shoemaker had obviously been clever enough to close them all because of the heat and to block out the burning sun with blinds. He could not take a look inside the house.

Undecidedly he stopped behind a bush. What should he do now? Jupe would have come up with something clever, he’s sure. He could always think of something. Pete’s only thought was to drive back to Rocky Beach.

Suddenly the door to the terrace opened. Quick as lightning he ducked and peered through the foliage. Michelle Shoemaker came out, holding a glass of water in one hand and a cordless telephone in the other. She sat down in a garden chair, took a sip and dialled a number.

“Hello Jack. This is Michelle. I know you’re waiting for the article, but I’m not ready. This Truman guy just won’t talk to me. I can’t get anything out of him... No, I can do it, I just need more time!

“Of course it’s worth it, because I have a new lead—three guys from Rocky Beach, who have already appeared twice at Truman’s place. They’re connected to this thing. I just have to find out what... Please, Jack, just two more days and I should have it. There’s another lead I could find out about the case, but I’ll have to wait till tomorrow.

“This won’t be a sideline on the local page, this will be a big story! Nationwide! I guarantee you that! ... Well, listen, we’re not talking about the tale of woe of Josephine Jonas, which our dear colleague wrote and which nobody cares about. Or a long-forgotten movie.

“There’s something much bigger than that. After all, it’s an actual murder.”

12. The Joke of a Maze

“Murder?” Jupiter asked, surprised.

“Yes, that’s what she said!” Pete confirmed. “I was so frightened I almost fell into the bushes!”

“Why murder?” Bob said. “What does any of this have to do with murder?”

“I don’t know. I know as little as you do. That’s when the kettle in the house started whistling and she went in. Unfortunately, she never came out.”

“What a bummer,” mumbled Jupiter.

He and Bob had been waiting for Pete at Headquarters, who had returned surprisingly quickly and told them about his observations.

“But I knew it!” Jupiter exclaimed. “I knew there was a big secret about *Utopia*! I hadn’t expected murder, but Miss Jonas’s behaviour seemed very strange to me.”

“Now the only question is how to solve the mystery,” Bob noted. “Isn’t it absurd that Miss Shoemaker thinks we had something to do with it and know more than she does? The opposite is true! We are still completely in the dark. She’ll probably try to tail us. It would be better the other way round.”

“That’s not a bad idea,” Jupiter thought. “Maybe we should split up tomorrow. One of us will track down Miss Shoemaker, the others will go to Mr Truman. By the way, I’m not for telling him about what Pete found out today. I think he’s a bit worried. All we have to do is let him in on it as soon as it’s solved. And to that end, we need to find that film stock. All the tracks converge there.”

Pete nodded. “But how are we supposed to do that? Miss Jonas was just talking about gods again. That won’t get us anywhere except that tomorrow we can walk through the maze and examine each of the eight statues.”

“I have thought again about what Josephine Jonas said,” Jupiter pondered. “Did you notice? She spoke of gods in the garden and gods in the sky.”

“So what?” Pete asked.

“She said in the sky, not in heaven. Don’t you find that odd?” Jupiter asked.

“The old woman is strange, if you ask me,” Pete replied. “I don’t know why you thought she could tell us anything important.”

“Planets!” cried Bob abruptly.

“Excuse me?” Pete asked, confused.

“The planets of our solar system. They are named after gods. Maybe that’s what she meant. If she sees the planets as gods, then they are in the sky.”

“I thought of that too,” the First Investigator agreed and began to work on his lower lip. “It fits beautifully with what Edward Truman said before he died. The planetarium and the statues of the gods must not be destroyed. Gods in the sky, gods in the garden. But where is the connection? How does it all fit together?”

“We’re going to examine the planetarium in detail tomorrow,” Bob said. “And scrutinize every single god statue. We’ll find something.”

The Three Investigators had arranged for Pete to shadow Miss Shoemaker. Jupiter didn't have a car and she already knew Bob's yellow Beetle. The two of them went to Beverly Hills right after breakfast to examine the planetarium and the statues. Mr Truman had received them. As expected, he was grumpy and had not been very cooperative so far.

"A map?" Stanley Truman shook his head. "There is no map of the maze."

"There are none?" Bob repeated. "But how else can you find your way around it?"

Truman smiled. "That's the joke of a maze."

"And you? Don't you get lost when you go for a walk in it?" asked Jupiter.

"Not anymore. I grew up with the maze and know my way around it. But the students I hire every few months to trim the hedges regularly despair of it. But so far, everyone has got out." His eyes sparkled viciously. "Even though sometimes it took a little longer."

"Then can you at least tell us where to find the statues of the gods?" asked the First Investigator. "We must examine them."

"Are these the great results you were talking about yesterday, boy?" Truman asked lurking.

"They are connected with it, yes," replied Jupiter confidently. He had no intention of being intimidated by Mr Truman.

"I can't tell you. I know where they are, but I couldn't describe the way for you. I have to be there to find my way around."

"Would you be so kind as to show us the way then?" Bob asked somewhat impatiently.

"No. Because I don't have time. I have to leave in five minutes. I guess you'll have to find your own way through the maze." He turned and left the study.

"We should take that thousand dollars after all," mumbled Bob. "Good thing Pete's not here. He would have freaked out by now."

Undecidedly they stood around in the study, but only a moment later the owner came back. "What is it? Are you going to put down roots here? Get out into the garden!"

"We'd like to take one last look at the planetarium before we make our way through the labyrinth," said Jupiter.

"Didn't you hear? I have to go right away! Or do you think I'll let you walk around my house alone?"

"Yes," Jupiter replied dryly. "Because if you want results, you have to let us do our work. And that requires, among other things, that we can visit the planetarium whenever we need to."

Truman frowned at him for a few heartbeats. Then he went puffing towards the desk, opened a drawer and took out a key. He tossed it to the First Investigator. "Lock up when you leave the house! Don't let anyone in! Don't answer the phone! And don't you dare snoop around here, understood? If you damage the planetarium, you will be in the biggest trouble of your life, I promise you!"

"Aye, sir," mumbled Bob.

Without another word, Mr Truman left the room. A few moments later, they heard the front door open, then a car drove away.

"What a charming contemporary he is. What now, Juve? Do we really want to go through the maze again like lunatics? It's useless. It'll take us hours to find all the statues."

"I have a better idea." The First Investigator went to the photographs hanging on the wall and took down a frame.

"Don't let Truman know about this," Bob warned. "If he finds out you've been snooping around his study, all hell will break loose. What's this picture? And what do you want with it?"

“That,” replied Jupiter and held up the photo smiling, “is our map.” It was an old aerial photograph of Truman’s house and grounds. The colours had faded over time, but the building and maze were still clearly visible.

“But you can’t see the statues, the photo is too small for that,” Bob noted.

“That’s true, but we can see the passages. At least we won’t get lost. It’s better than nothing. Come on, let’s get out there and get to work.”

“I thought you wanted to see the planetarium first?”

“We’ll do that later,” Jupe said. “It’s not so hot outside now. I don’t think we’ll be able to stand the heat in the maze this afternoon.”

They left the house and walked across the lawn to the entrance of the labyrinth. Aphrodite smiled at them. Faced with the work ahead of them, the smile seemed almost vicious to the boys.

Jupiter sighed deeply. “Let’s do it!”

13. Tailing

Pete had already been waiting for almost two hours in front of Michelle Shoemaker's house. He had got up at half past six—and that during the holidays. As he didn't know when she left the house, he wanted to be there early rather than late.

But by now, it was after nine and she still hadn't left. Pete had to be careful not to doze off. Bored, he played around the car radio hoping that his favourite song would be played on some station when finally the front door opened and Michelle Shoemaker came out. She headed straight for her car, got in and drove off. Pete took up the chase.

This time the way led him to Santa Monica. This small but prosperous town was just outside Los Angeles. Pete was afraid that Michelle Shoemaker would go to her office and his trail would end there, but in Santa Monica she turned off the main road and drove to a small housing estate.

At Hillside Road she stopped, walked towards a house and rang the bell. A moment later an elderly lady opened the door for her, greeted her with a handshake and the two of them disappeared into the house.

"The same game from the front," muttered Pete, got out and strolled past the house to have a look at the name on the mailbox—'Stark'. But that was the name of the man in the mask! His daughter, with whom Bob had spoken yesterday, had to live here!

Pete looked around and was finding for a way to sneak around the house unseen when a little boy from the neighbouring house stepped out, noticed him and looked at him curiously. Pete tried to ignore him, but as long as the boy stared at him, he could not enter Miss Stark's property. In order not to stand too conspicuously in front of the house, the Second Investigator pulled out his pocket diary and flipped through it busily.

The little boy came towards him, stopped right in front of him and stared up at him. "Why do you look like that?"

"What?"

"What happened to your face? Does it always look like this? So blue and yellow?"

"No," Pete answered irritably and delved into his calendar again.

"Did you get in a fight?"

"No. I had an accident. Now get lost."

"Did it hurt?"

"Yes."

"Me, too. Look, I had an accident too." The boy pointed accusingly at his scraped knee. "Playing ball."

"How nice. Don't you have anything to do? Go play!"

"There is no one there to play with. All my friends are on vacation. Holidays are boring."

"I don't think so," Pete replied succinctly. How could he possibly get rid of this fellow?

"Are you on vacation too?"

"Yes."

"You still go to school?"

"Yes."

"Really?"

“That’s exciting. Listen, I’d like to be left alone now.”

“Why?”

Pete rolled his eyes. With good persuasion he got nowhere here. Bribery was the only thing that would help. He reached into his trousers pocket and took out a dollar coin. “Here. Here’s a little consolation for your injured knee. There’s a supermarket over there. Go and buy yourself an ice cream.”

“My mum said I can’t take money from strangers.”

“Then go but don’t buy ice cream!”

Suddenly, Miss Stark’s front door was opened. Pete spun around and said, “I must go now!” He just left the boy and hurried back to his car.

“Thank you so much for your time, Miss Stark.”

“You’re welcome.”

“Hello, Miss Stark!” The little boy said.

“Hello, Benny.”

The voices behind him became quieter. Pete jumped into his MG and watched as Michelle Shoemaker waved at the old lady again, got into her car and drove off.

Had she seen him? Should he call off the pursuit? Pete decided against it, started the engine and drove behind.

This time it was a short drive. The red Chrysler stopped in downtown Santa Monica, Miss Shoemaker got out of the car and sat down in a street café, which was still quite deserted at this time of the day. Only three other people were sitting there reading newspapers or making phone calls. Pete parked nearby and watched as she ordered something and then took a notebook out of her handbag. She wrote something in it.

The coffee came, she put the book aside, picked up her bag again and took out a pack of cigarettes. It was empty. Frustrated, she rose and entered a tobacco shop next to the café. She left the notebook on the table.

That was the opportunity! Pete jumped out of the car, hurriedly walked towards the table and without looking around he reached for the black book. He quickly stuffed it into the waistband of his trousers and disappeared around the next corner.

14. On the Wrong Track

“Nothing,” growled Bob. “Absolutely nothing. I’d say examining the stupid statues is a slap in the face. They are statues! They’re stone! What’s there to find?”

For two hours, Bob and Jupe had already walked through the labyrinth. The photo was a help, but they still had not found all the gods. One was missing.

They were just standing in front of Poseidon, the grim looking god of the sea. His lower body turned into a fish’s tail and he held a trident in his clenched fist. They had tapped the figure for cavities and with united forces tried to move it from the spot, but in vain. They stood on concrete pedestals, which were embedded deep into the earth.

“But there must be something to find,” Jupiter insisted. “Otherwise I cannot explain the puzzle of the gods in the garden.”

“I think the only thing left to do is to dig those things up,” Bob said. “But then Mr Truman will tear our heads off.”

“I don’t know,” mumbled Jupiter. “I can’t get rid of the feeling that there’s no need to look inside or under the statues.”

“You just said there must be something to find.”

“Yes. But I don’t necessarily mean the film stock. More of a clue,” Jupiter said. “Maybe it’s not about something that’s hidden here, maybe it’s about the gods themselves.”

“About the gods themselves? I do not understand,” Bob said.

“Possibly about the things they hold in their hands, the direction they look, the place they stand. I don’t know either. Just a thought.”

While Bob indecisively circled the sea god looking for anything out of the ordinary, Jupiter tore a sheet from his notebook, laid it on the photo and traced the rough outlines of the maze. He then drew the locations of the statues they had found so far and added arrows to indicate the direction in which the figures were facing. He looked at the sketch for a while. Secretly, he had hoped to discover a logical pattern that made sense, but all he saw was chaos.

“Let’s move on. Perhaps the last god will give us the decisive clue.” He took one look at the photo and turned once in a circle for orientation. “That way!”

As they roamed through the maze, it got hotter and hotter. Finally, sweat was on their faces and Bob moaned, “I want to get out of here! I’m thirsty!”

“There’s not much left,” Jupiter reassured him. “We’ve combed through almost everything. Once we find the last statue, we’ll go back to the cool house.” He turned the next corner and a figure glowing brightly in the sunshine appeared in front of them. “When one speaks of the gods, they are usually not far away. Here he is, the last god.”

He stepped closer and looked at it closely. The figure looked quite similar to Zeus, but his face was even darker, his posture more menacing, and his hair seemed to consist of frozen flames. “Hades,” Jupe noted by looking at the base. “The god of the underworld.”

“Well, wonderful. The underworld. The culmination of an odyssey of the gods.” Bob walked up to the statue and half-heartedly examined it. “Now where’s the secret?”

Jupiter drew the location on his map, but even now the position of the gods did not make any sense. “I have no idea,” he confessed. “And I don’t feel like it anymore. Let’s go back

into the house!”

They quickly found their way around based on the photo. If one knew the way, it was a matter of five minutes to get to the centre of the maze.

Just as Jupiter unlocked the front door, someone honked in the street. He didn’t pay any further attention, but then the horn boomed without a break. The First Investigator turned around. In the street at the end of the driveway stood a red MG.

“Hey, that’s Pete!” The First Investigator went into the house, opened the automatic gate from there and let Pete drive through. The Second Investigator parked next to Bob’s car and got out.

“You’re here after all! I already arrived an hour ago and my fingers were getting sore. Then I walked up and down in front of the gate and waited, thinking you were still in Rocky Beach.”

“We were in the maze,” Bob explained. “And Mr Truman isn’t there.”

“He left you here alone? Amazing,” Pete remarked.

“It wasn’t easy to get him to do it either,” Jupiter agreed. “What about you? Have you achieved anything?”

“You can say that again.” Pete grinned broadly.

“Whatever you found out, tell us when we get inside,” Bob asked. “I’m dying of thirst.”

They went into the house and got a glass of water each. With this they climbed up the spiral staircase, opened the skylight and sat on the narrow bench in the planetarium hall. While Bob and Jupiter were once again fascinated by the technical marvel, Pete reported on his pursuit.

“Stark?” asked Bob when Pete told him about Miss Shoemaker’s first stop. “A Miss Stark in Santa Monica? That’s the daughter of Ken Stark, the actor! You know, the woman who told me on the phone that her father’s death was responsible for stopping the filming, even though he only had a small costume part.”

Pete nodded. “Right. Michelle Shoemaker was apparently following the same leads we were... but for completely different reasons. We’re trying to find a missing film stock. She wants to solve a murder.”

Jupiter bent over curiously. “Did you find out what the mysterious hint of the murder meant?”

“Yes. Before returning to her office, she stopped for a drink at a sidewalk café. And when she went out for cigarettes, I took this from her.” Pete took out the black notebook and smiled at them.

“You stole it from her?” Bob asked in amazement.

“She left it on the table,” Pete defended himself. “I walked past it and took it with me. Would you call that stealing?”

“Well, it’s certainly not fair play,” Juve said. “Don’t forget that just because we’re detectives, we don’t have a free pass for illegal actions.”

“Is it fair play for her to come after us?” the Second Investigator defended himself. “I just turned the tables, that’s all. Besides, you too will change your mind when you read the notebook, Juve. Unfortunately, she only wrote down notes, but they’re enough to give you an idea of the whole story behind *Utopia*.”

The First Investigator took the book out of his hand without another word and began to leaf through it.

“While Jupiter absorbs every detail, you can give me the summary, Pete,” Bob suggested.

“All right. Ken Stark did not die in a car accident back then. He was murdered.”

“What?”

“At least that’s what it says in the notes,” Pete said. “Miss Shoemaker doesn’t seem to know the motives herself. Either it was money or jealousy or both, she’s not quite sure. But she found out when and how it happened—namely, during the shooting.”

“What do you mean?”

“The movie was actually already finished, only a few scenes had to be re-shot. Among other things, a scene in which a futuristic vehicle—a converted car, that is—was to race towards the Mr Stark in costume, brake at the last moment and stop a metre in front of him. The scene was prepared down to the last detail, then shooting started. The camera was running, the car was moving—but it didn’t brake. Ken Stark was run over and killed instantly.”

“I don’t believe it! And all this was filmed?” Bob asked.

“Exactly. And that’s the real reason the film stock disappeared. Because it turned out not to be an accident. Someone had sabotaged the brakes of the car. The attack was covered up and a normal car accident was faked, but the footage proves what really happened.”

“And who was the saboteur?” Bob wanted to know.

“In the notebook, there is a list of half a dozen suspects—actually all of them who were present at the re-shoot. It was a minimal crew, since the official shooting was already finished. One of them was Edward Truman, anyway.”

“Do you really think he did it? What director would be stupid enough to kill somebody on camera?”

“I don’t know. Anyway, now we know why Michelle Shoemaker is after *Utopia*. She wants to turn the evidence of the murder into a big story.”

“And we seem to be suspicious as well,” remarked Jupe, who had been listening with half an ear. “Because there are also some notes about us in there. Here for example, Miss Stark says someone called her yesterday about the same story—one of the three boys? It also has the addresses of Pete and me. Who does she think we are?”

“Since we work for Mr Truman, at least we’re not her friends,” Bob said. “After all, he was the one who kept throwing her out.”

“So it’s about murder,” said Jupiter, sighing and slamming the book shut. “I wonder if Mr Truman knows about this.”

Bob shook his head. “I don’t think so. Do you think his father would have told him? No, I think he’s telling us the truth. He believes in the story of the dispute between the producers and has hired us to find the film stock because he doesn’t want anyone else to do it and bring it to the public. But not because it shows a murder, but because his father thought *Utopia* was bad.”

“Of course, there’s another possibility—Miss Shoemaker put this whole thing together based on insufficient information, and there’s not one word of truth in the murder story.” Jupiter lifted himself up and slowly walked towards the centre of the planetarium. “Anyway, we should find the film stock as soon as possible before she does. She seems pretty sharp.”

“And how are we gonna do that?” Pete asked.

“I don’t know. The key must be here—at the planetarium.” He turned it on and the planets and moons began their eternal dance.

They watched for a while, then Pete asked, “What came out of your wandering through the labyrinth?”

“Nothing,” hummed Jupiter. “Except that now we have found all eight gods—Hermes, Aphrodite, Ares, Zeus, Kronos, Ouranos, Poseidon and Hades.”

“Ouranos? Sounds like Uranus, the planet. What kind of god is that? No, wait, don’t tell me, I don’t want to know!”

“Just a moment!” cried Jupiter suddenly. “What did you just say?”

“That I do not want to know. No offence, but I’m not in the mood for mythological lessons right now,” Pete quipped.

“No, before that! Ouranos sounds like Uranus? But that’s exactly what it is!” Jupiter looked with shining eyes at the circling planets. “I’m a fool! It’s so obvious! Why didn’t I think of it right away?”

“What on earth are you talking about, Jupe?” Bob wanted to know.

“Gods in the garden, gods in the sky. I think I just solved this puzzle of gods!”

15. Greco-Roman Gods

“Would you mind filling us in, Jupe?” Bob asked.

“Ancient Rome had its own culture, but much of it was shaped by the Greeks,” Jupiter explained. “When the Romans conquered Greece, they adopted Greek culture in many areas—music, art, literature, philosophy and even religion.

“Greek mythology pre-dates Roman mythology over 1,000 years. Roman mythology had different origins compared to Greek mythology, but little by little, the Roman associated many, but not all, of their gods with Greek gods—especially those that stood for the same ideals and principles.

“Ancient Roman astronomers named visible planets after Roman gods, and after the invention of telescopes, astronomers continued this tradition and used the names of Roman gods for new planets. However, the two exceptions were Uranus, as it is from Greek mythology, and Earth, which is not named after a god.”

“Huh?” Pete interrupted him. “So what has all this to do with our puzzle?”

“A lot. If you would listen to me further, you would find out for yourself. For example, both the Romans and the Greeks had a goddess of beauty and love. For the Romans, she was called Venus. And for the Greeks—”

“Aphrodite,” Bob thought.

“So what? I still don’t understand what you’re trying to tell us, Jupe,” Pete said impatiently.

“Geez, Pete!” sighed Bob. “Venus and Aphrodite! Doesn’t that mean anything to you?”

“They are goddesses of beauty and love... So?” Pete remarked.

“Venus is name of a planet too! This one!” Bob pointed to the little yellow ball that was spinning from the inside on the second orbit.

“I see! And Aphrodite, the Greek goddess, is in the garden,” Pete exclaimed.

Jupiter nodded. “Exactly! This game works with all the Greek gods that are in the labyrinth. Mercury, the Roman god whose name was used for the planet, finds his Greek equivalent in Hermes. Mars for Ares; Jupiter for Zeus; Saturn for Kronos; Neptune for Poseidon; and Pluto for Hades.”

“With Venus, that makes seven,” Pete counted.

“Right. As I said earlier, Uranus and Earth are the exceptions. The name ‘Uranus’ is based on the Latin spelling of Ouranos—the Greek god of the sky.”

Pete frowned. “So that means—”

“That the statues of the gods corresponds with the planets! This is the connection! However, Edward Truman chose the Greek names for the statues so as not to make it too obvious.”

“Fantastic, Jupe!” cried the Second Investigator enthusiastically.

“It would never have occurred to me that Venus and Aphrodite are the same. You have actually solved the puzzle. Only...” The enthusiasm disappeared from his voice and face.

“What are we going to do with it now? We still haven’t found the film stock.”

“No,” Jupiter admitted. “But we are very close, I am sure! This is the key to the secret.”

“Well, then I guess we just have to find the lock,” Pete remarked with little conviction.

Jupiter wandered around the planetarium, letting the models pass by and pinched his lower lip incessantly.

"Find the lock," he murmured. "Find the lock..."

Bob also got up and joined the walk. "Then I can think better," he claimed and looked strained at his feet as the planets whirled past him. Unconsciously he strode the bizarre tile pattern on the floor.

"Well, I'd rather sit down," said Pete and watched the two of them walk around. "But I still can't think of anything. What you say sounds incredibly logical, Juve, but I have absolutely no idea how it will lead us to the film stock's hiding place."

"Bummer!" cursed Jupiter softly and began quoting Miss Jonas: "'Ask the gods! Gods in the garden, gods in the sky! The gods know the secret!' Yes, Miss Jonas, you're right, we've solved the puzzle, but what do we do with it now?"

Pete sighed resignedly. "Maybe you just interpret too much into what the old lady said, Juve. Who knows what she was really thinking about at that moment! After all, two seconds later, she was already thinking about shower repairs or her dessert again. If we're unlucky, her ramblings have nothing to do with the movie."

"No," contradicted Jupiter. "I am sure that we are close to the solution and only fail to see the forest for the trees."

Bob stopped dead in his tracks. "The forest for the trees?"

"Right. That's what it feels like," confirmed Jupiter and a moment later collided with Bob. "Hey, Bob! I think your brain works better when you're moving. Bob?"

Bob stared at the floor. "That's it!"

"What? Hey!" Juve cried. "I'm responsible for brainstorming! Come on, spit it out. What's on your mind?"

Bob narrowed his eyes. "If you can't see the forest for the trees, it's usually because you're standing right in front of a tree trunk."

"Has the heat softened your brain?" Pete enquired anxiously. "What are you talking about?"

"This is not nonsense at all," Bob said. "You can't see the forest for the trees, because you are too close to it. Just like you can't see a maze in a maze, only hedges."

"Uh..."

"You can only see the labyrinth pattern from a distance. Like the photo Juve and I used as a map today. From above."

He snapped his fingers, turned around and ran up the metal stairs that lead to the platform under the skylight. Finally, he stood next to the telescope, which allowed him to look at the stars through the opening.

"What is it now?" cried Pete. "Do you want to search the sky for gods?"

"No. I'm trying to get some distance and get an overview," Bob explained. "And the best way to do that is from above. Come up here and take a look."

Curiously Jupiter and Pete followed him. It was narrow on the platform in threes, but the view was impressive. They were only about six metres above the floor, but from here the planetarium looked completely different, much more orderly. The model planets were spinning like on a gigantic turntable.

"From above it looks like a merry-go-round," Pete said. "Don't you think? The small moons are the gondolas. It makes you dizzy just watching. So, Bob, where's your great discovery?"

"Don't you see?"

"See what?" Pete asked.

"It's right under your nose!"

"The model planets, yes. That's what it was before."

Bob shook his head impatiently. "Not the model planets! The floor tiles!"

Jupiter gasped for breath. "The labyrinth!"

Now Pete noticed it too. The pattern, which had looked completely arbitrary from the floor, merged into an orderly whole when viewed from a height. It looked just like the aerial view of the labyrinth in the photo that Bob and Jupiter had shown him—the lines on the floor were identical to the labyrinth!

"Oh, my goodness!" Pete exclaimed.

"You see, the planets are circling the labyrinth," Bob said. "This is not only a model of our solar system, but also of the labyrinth in whose centre we are now at."

Jupiter nodded excitedly. "And that's not all! Only now do I notice it—the statues in the garden are arranged in the same order as the planets. Hermes, that is Mercury, is right next to the front door. A little further away, on the other side of the house, is Aphrodite, that's Venus. Then comes Ares and Zeus and so on."

"What does it mean?" Pete asked.

"That means we have found the lock for the key!" Jupe exclaimed.

"What do you mean, Jupe?" Pete asked again.

"The model of the solar system here is like a giant combination lock!"

Pete frowned. "A combination lock? And where, pray tell, are the numbers?"

"The role of the numbers are played by the planet positions," Jupe said. "You have to put the model planets in a particular position for the door to open."

"And the gods tell us the planet positions," Bob continued. "That's right, Jupe! The gods know the secret! This is what Josephine Jonas meant!"

"Wait, wait, wait!" cried Pete and raised his hand. "This is all happening too fast for me. What have the gods got to do with it now?"

"Oh, Pete," said Jupe, shaking his head. "You are very slow on the uptake today."

He hurriedly took out the scribbled map of the labyrinth out of his pocket and held it under the Second Investigator's nose. "You see, that's the labyrinth, with the position of the god statues marked. Now we have to transfer the positions onto the tile pattern here. After that, if we move each model planet to its corresponding marked position, the door opens. Simple!"

"Okay, got it," nodded Pete. "But what about Earth? It has no substitute in the maze."

"It doesn't matter. Earth is the only unknown," Jupiter explained. "After all the planets have been set correctly, we only need to rotate Earth once in a circle. At some point it clicks!"

"That's brilliant, Jupe!" cried Bob. "That's exactly how it should be! That is why the statues are so firmly anchored in the ground. Edward Truman wanted to prevent them from being switched at all costs, because that would have destroyed the code."

"My goodness, this is probably the biggest puzzle in the world. And you can't actually solve the puzzle until you're far enough away to get an overview from a greater height. We walked the whole time through that maze of floor tiles down there and didn't see it."

"Like the forest for the trees," Jupiter added with satisfaction. "Well done, Bob. I don't know if I would have thought of climbing up here."

"I hate to disturb you while you are patting each other on the back," Pete said hesitantly. "But we have a problem."

"What kind of problem?" Jupiter wondered. "You think Truman won't let us turn the planetarium around? Don't worry. When we present our findings to him, he'll be convinced."

“No, no, I mean something completely different,” Pete said.

“Which is?” Jupe asked.

“I have only just discovered it myself,” Pete continued. “Take another good look at the planetarium. What do you see?”

“A masterpiece of engineering,” said Jupiter.

“The nine planets of our solar system,” was Bob’s answer.

“Wrong. It’s not nine. It’s ten!”

16. The Ninth God

“But a tenth planet makes no sense at all,” shouted Bob repeatedly as they walked through the maze. “We only have nine.”

“In *Utopia*, there were ten,” Jupiter recalled. “The aliens in the movie came from the tenth planet, Planet X. The inclusion of a tenth planet in the planetarium was probably Edward Truman’s tongue-in-cheek reference to his movie. I’m just annoyed we didn’t notice it before.”

“Well, once the planetarium is spinning, you’re so fascinated that you pay attention to all kinds of things, but you certainly don’t count the models,” Pete interjected. “I only noticed it because the outermost planet was no longer within the tile pattern.”

“This can only mean there is another god, number nine, outside the maze!” Jupiter exclaimed.

Jupiter took a look at the photo and at the next intersection, he took the left path. “Now we go straight on for a bit and then we should be able to get out.”

“All this running around,” Pete complained. “And what with the temperature! Edward Truman is not making it easy for us.”

They reached the hedge opening that led out onto the lawn beyond the property. This was where they had first entered the labyrinth two days earlier. The air was flickering with heat and insects were everywhere.

“Do you really think we’ll find anything here?” Bob asked.

“The ninth god must be hidden somewhere,” Jupiter said.

“At least he’s not around here,” Bob noted with a glance at the round. “At the most, he’s up in the woods.” They climbed up the hill and stepped into the shade between the trees.

Pete crossed his arms and looked around. “What’s that thing about the forest you can’t see for the trees? I’d say we can’t see the god for the trees. Well, if you ask me, we’re looking in the wrong place. I doubt Truman would have been stupid enough to put a statue in the middle of the woods. And even if he did, that was decades ago. The forest is open to everyone from the other side. If there was a statue of a god here, it’s long gone.”

Bob turned around and looked down into the valley. The left and right sides of the maze were bordered by the neighbouring properties, which were separated by a high fence. “I don’t suppose he put them in the neighbour’s garden, either.”

“So all that’s left is the side to the road,” remarked Jupiter.

“But even there, there is no god. Where is it?” Bob said.

“Let’s check it out anyway.” Jupiter turned around and walked down the lawn to the maze.

“I hate this maze!” Bob said gloomily. “When this case is over, I don’t want to see any more hedges for at least a year!”

“For your birthday I’ll give you a book of puzzles full of mazes,” Pete promised with a grin. “Then you’ll get used to it.”

Despite having a map, it took them a quarter of an hour to reach the other side. Jupiter went inside to open the automatic gate, then they strolled down the long driveway to the road.

An old woman laboriously dragged her shopping home, otherwise it was quiet. The people had crawled into their houses to get out of the heat. There were no visitors in the small cemetery opposite.

“Not a god in sight,” Pete noted. “And now what?”

“Somewhere there must be a ninth god,” claimed Jupiter. “I am sure that our theory is correct. Think, colleagues, where could Edward Truman have hidden his last statue?”

They looked around helplessly. Finally, Bob pointed to the cemetery. “This is the only place that comes into question.”

“Let’s have a look there,” Jupiter suggested.

The cemetery was small, just a hundred graves crowded close together on the grounds. The air was still and the heat was even more oppressive here.

While The Three Investigators slowly roamed the narrow paths, they looked at the tombstones. No one had been buried here in the last thirty years. Many of the resting places looked as if they had not been tended to for ages. Some were completely overgrown with undergrowth.

“And now?” Pete asked at a loss. “There are many grave markers here, but I think hardly anybody comes here.”

“I think so as well,” Jupiter agreed.

“Hey, look here!” Bob had already moved on and pointed to the tombstone in front of him. “Here lies Edward Truman!”

Jupiter and Pete came curiously closer. Truman’s grave was simple. The black little grave marker was already half weathered. But behind the stone, hidden in the shade of a bush, a statue towered up—a human figure in flowing robes with his head lowered. His face was only a smooth surface, there were no eyes, no nose and no mouth.

“There we have him!” cried Jupiter. “That is our ninth god! The pedestal on which he stands may not have a name, but there’s no doubt about it. He fits perfectly with the other figures!”

“Edward Truman must have made sure before his death that he got this burial place and the statue was erected,” Bob pondered.

Jupiter pulled out his drawn labyrinth map, drew the cemetery on it and marked the place where the ninth god stood.

“The distance is about there,” he noted. “Come on, fellas, let’s try it!”

They left the cemetery and returned to the dome hall. They had turned off the planet rotation when they left. The First Investigator climbed up the stairs to the platform and gave the first instructions: “Let’s start with Mercury. It must go all the way to the other side!”

“Wait a minute,” Pete hesitated. “What if we’re wrong and we end up destroying the entire planetarium?”

“Nonsense!” Jupiter said. “In the end, this thing works just like a clock. With a watch you can also turn the hands without breaking them.”

“Sure. But this watch here has ten hands,” Pete interjected.

“Come on!” Jupiter insisted. “If it doesn’t work, we can always turn everything back. Mr Truman won’t know what hit him.”

“All right. But it’s your responsibility.” The Second Investigator reached for Mercury and pushed it forward towards the marked position of Hermes. The mechanics whirled, but the destructive crackling he feared did not occur.

“A little more. That’s it! Hold it there,” Jupiter instructed. “Next is Venus to Aphrodite. It’s almost right. Just a little more to the left.”

Planet by planet, The Three Investigators were put in the right position. Jupiter could see from above, from the ground pattern, which was the exact position. The more models were in place, the more nervous he became. What if Pete was right and in the end nothing happened? Then Jupiter would have run out of ideas. If this was not the solution to the puzzle, then he did not know what to do.

They had just arrived at Planet X when suddenly the spiral staircase creaked. A few seconds later, Mr Truman entered the room and stared in horror, one by one. "What are you doing? Are you crazy? Stop this at once!"

"Don't worry, Mr Truman, we know what we're doing," Jupiter tried to calm him down.

"You obviously don't know anything!" yelled Truman. He turned red and stormed towards Bob, who was about to turn Planet X. Angrily, he slapped Bob's hand aside. "I told you not to touch the planetarium!"

"But that's the solution to the puzzle!" Jupiter remarked.

"What are you doing up there, boy? Get down from there now!"

Jupiter sighed and climbed down the stairs. "Believe us, we found the film stock's hiding place."

"You what? Then why are you destroying the planetarium?"

"We are not destroying it, we're just opening the door," Jupiter explained.

"I hope you can explain this to me!" Mr Truman shouted.

Jupiter nodded, took a deep breath and began to describe the results of their research as calmly and objectively as possible. Stanley Truman tried to interrupt him several times, but the First Investigator didn't lose his cool and just went on. Finally, Truman listened. And by the time Jupiter had finished, the anger of the owner was almost gone.

"This is amazing," he confessed. "It's really quite amazing. Either you are completely crazy and have just destroyed a priceless mechanical masterpiece—or you are actually right. Hiding the film stock in this way, that would have suited my father. I still remember my birthdays well. I never got my present just like that, I always had to look for it. With self-made puzzles he had me run all over the house, sometimes it took me hours to find the hiding place."

"Maybe he wanted to train you then, so that one day you could solve this puzzle too," Bob said.

"All right. Finish what you started. It doesn't matter now anyway."

Jupiter smiled contentedly, went over to Planet X and pushed it into the right place.

"There. Now everyone is in position. All that's missing is the Earth."

"I'm on my way," excitedly shouted Pete, ran over to the blue and white painted ball and pushed it forward.

"Not too fast, Pete, or you might miss the right spot!" Jupe cried.

The Second Investigator reduced his tempo and went very slowly step by step. They waited anxiously for something to happen. Only a soft whirring could be heard.

Suddenly, the planet snapped in with a loud click and a piece of the floor mosaic opened like the lid of a jack-in-the-box. All four flinched and stared at the opening in the floor.

Bob was the first to find his voice. "A real secret hiding place! Only the gods know the secret."

"And we," Jupiter added.

They stepped towards the hole. It was about a 30 centimetre square and so cleverly inserted into the labyrinth pattern that the edges were not noticeable at all. The secret compartment below was about 30 centimetres deep. Inside was a dark wooden box. Awe-inspiringly, they stood around the opening.

"I'm impressed," confessed Mr Truman. "Here you go, the three of you. You solved the puzzle, so you deserve to open the box."

"Nothing would please me more!" Jupiter knelt down and lifted the box from its hiding place. "Pretty heavy!"

The lid of the box was fitted with simple latches. The First Investigator undid them and opened the box. Inside were three identical large, metal film containers of about 20 centimetres in diameter. They were labelled '*Utopia*'.

"Yes!" cried Pete. "We got it! Your father's legendary movie!" He picked up one of the containers and opened it. Inside was a reel of celluloid film.

"Congratulations," said Mr Truman smiling. "That was a masterstroke!"

"Why are there three reels?" Bob asked, astonished.

"It should be a long movie, so it doesn't fit on one reel. At that time, cinemas still had pauses during the screening when the reels were changed," Mr Truman explained.

"Can we see it?" Pete was excited.

"My father didn't want anyone to ever see this movie, but under the circumstances he would have made an exception." Truman winked at them. "I don't have a projector, but I'll get one tomorrow. And then I'm inviting you to an exclusive screening of *Utopia*. What do you think?"

"Great!" cried Bob. "This is better than any pay! We'll be the first and probably only ones to ever see the movie! And who knows, maybe it's not so bad. Artists often find it difficult to judge their own work. The movie can still make it in cinemas especially with the legendary status it had garnered. I'm sure it'll be a hit!"

"Wait and see," Mr Truman replied placatively. "Let's first see what was really captured on celluloid so long ago."

The Three Investigators looked at each other furtively, but said nothing.

Totally exhausted by the heat and excitement of the day, The Three Investigators sat at their headquarters in the evening and talked about their experiences.

"If Michelle Shoemaker is indeed right about her murder theory, Mr Truman will get a shock of his life tomorrow," said Bob. "Don't you think we should give him a little heads-up before we see the movie together?"

Jupiter pulled a wry face. "Is this a good idea? If she's wrong, we would have rocked the boat unnecessarily."

"And if she's not mistaken, then Truman would be taken by surprise," Pete said. "He's an extremely unlikeable person, but we shouldn't do this to him anyway. This afternoon, he was actually quite nice. Imagine what would happen if tomorrow's screening reveals that his father was really involved in a murder."

They remained silent thoughtfully. Finally Bob said: "One thing is certain. We have found *Utopia*, but the case is not yet closed. The big end is yet to come. I can't help it. I have a bad feeling about this."

There was a knock at the door.

"Who could that be?" Pete wondered. "Your Aunt Mathilda doesn't usually knock, she prefers to shout all over the salvage yard."

The First Investigator shrugged, stood up and opened the door.

A young woman with long black hair stood in front of the trailer. She looked at him unsteadily.

"Good evening. My name is Michelle Shoemaker. I need to talk to you."

17. Freedom of the Press

Pete and Bob jumped up and pushed themselves next to Jupiter.

“What... what can we do for you?” asked the Second Investigator.

“I’m a reporter for *Vision Weekly* and...”

“We know who you are,” Jupiter interrupted her and spontaneously decided to drop all masks. Whatever Miss Shoemaker wanted from them, now that they had found the film stock, she could no longer get in their way.

“You’re after *Utopia* and have been to see Mr Truman several times. You have searched for information at the *Los Angeles Times* archives and visited Ken Stark’s daughter. You’ve also been following us. And this morning, you lost your notebook.”

Miss Shoemaker stared at him in awe. “How... what...”

“You are here because you want something from us,” Jupiter suspected. “That is fortunate, because we too would have some questions for you. How about an exchange of information?”

She nodded her head in amazement. “I would be very much in favour of it.”

The Three Investigators stepped outside and closed the door to Headquarters. The salvage yard was still open, but there was no customer on the premises. In a quarter of an hour, Aunt Mathilda would close the gate. They were undisturbed.

“I would be very interested to know how you know so much about me,” Miss Shoemaker wanted to know.

“All right,” Jupiter said and The Three Investigators took turns talking about their accidental and deliberate encounters with Miss Shoemaker, but they left out the part that they had found the film containers. At the end, she looked at them with wide eyes, but little by little her surprise subsided.

When Pete finished his report, she turned to him, a little angry, and said, “I’d like my notebook back.”

“No problem.” The Second Investigator reached into his pocket and handed her the book. “Here you are!”

She shook her head slowly. “I must say, you three are pretty sly. I can learn a thing or two from you.”

Pete nodded. “Yeah. Like how you can tail someone without them knowing it.”

“How about you tell us your story now?” Jupiter suggested.

“There’s not much to tell,” Miss Shoemaker began. “You already know almost everything. I became aware of *Utopia* through my colleague’s article on Josephine Jonas and sensed a story.

“During my research, I came across the murder story, but it could not be proven. So I decided to look for proof myself. I went to see Mr Truman, but he wouldn’t listen to reason. And then I found out that the three of you apparently work for him. That’s what puzzled me. I finally found out that you’re detectives.

“I read about you in the papers before. So I wondered if you even knew the person whom you are working for and decided to play with open cards and visit you. Well, here I am.”

“What do you mean by the person who we are working for?” Bob asked.

“Well, Mr. Truman!” Miss Shoemaker said. “It’s obvious why, after all these years, he’s suddenly so keen to find the film stock!”

“Which is why?” Bob asked.

“He wants to destroy the evidence! Evidence that his father was involved in a murder case!”

“But Mr Truman doesn’t know anything about a murder case,” contradicted Jupiter. “If there’s any truth to the story, his father never told him. Stanley Truman assumes the reason his father never released the movie is that he thought it was bad.”

Miss Shoemaker opened her eyes and laughed shrilly. “He told you that? I guess you’re not as smart as I thought you were. He knows about the murder!”

“What makes you think of that?” Bob asked.

“I spoke to him. And he told me.”

“Excuse me?” Bob said.

“When he refused an interview, I immediately told him the truth. And he replied that I would never be able to prove anything about his father because the film stock was lost and would never be found again. Thank goodness you haven’t found it yet!”

The Three Investigators looked at each other. Jupiter swallowed. “I’m afraid we did.”

“He won’t open!” cursed Pete and pressed the bell one more time.

“Are you surprised?” Bob asked. “He probably suspects reporters. Now that the film stock is back, I wouldn’t open it either, if I were him. I still can’t believe that we have been misled like that!”

“Come on, let’s climb over the gate,” Pete said, and jumped up and over the gate. It was easy for him to get to the other side. Bob was also over there within a few seconds, Miss Shoemaker had to pass her high heels through the grating before she could climb over.

“Come on, dumpling, don’t be clumsier than you are,” Pete teased the First Investigator.

“I’m clumsy,” confessed Jupiter and pulled himself up moaning. “That is... unfortunately... the truth!” Helplessly he hung on the bars halfway up, but with Bob and Pete’s help he too finally made it.

They hurriedly ran towards the house. By now it had become dark, only the entrance next to Hermes was dimly lit. Jupiter knocked on the door. Nothing moved. Not even after the second knock.

Finally, the First Investigator hammered vigorously on the door.

“Get out!” was Mr Truman’s voice coming from inside. “Or I call the police.”

“It’s us, Mr Truman!” cried Jupiter. “We’ve forgotten something! It’s very important!”

“Oh, you! Why didn’t you say so?” Footsteps approached, then the door was opened. “If this couldn’t wait till tomorrow... What are you doing here?”

When Stanley Truman saw Miss Shoemaker, he stared at her furiously. “What are you boys doing with this person? Get out of here!”

“We’ll explain that, Mr Truman,” Jupiter said firmly. “May we?” The First Investigator pushed his way past Truman and into the house.

“Hey! How dare you?” Mr Truman shouted.

The others also squeezed through the half-opened door. Stanley Truman was powerless. “What are you doing?” he yelled. “Are you all out of your senses?”

“What is that smell, Mr Truman?” asked Jupiter briskly. “Have you lit a fire in the study? In these summer temperatures? Or were you, by any chance, burning something?”

He stormed into the study at the end of the hall. The fireplace was really burning. There were three rolls of film beside it—unharmful. “So we arrived just in time for the first and last performances of *Utopia*, eh?”

Truman and the others entered the room. “Get out of my house now! And you too, you... you...”

“We’re very grateful to Miss Shoemaker for coming to see us tonight and giving us some interesting details.”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about, boy!” Mr Truman shouted.

“No games, Mr Truman. We know about you! You used us to find the film stock so you could burn it and destroy the evidence of Ken Stark’s murder.”

“I—” Mr Truman began.

“It was your father, wasn’t it?” Jupiter surmised. “And it’s all captured on these rolls of film! Or how else can you explain the fire in your fireplace?”

Stanley Truman opened his mouth but couldn’t make a sound. He stared at The Three Investigators and Miss Shoemaker in bewilderment. Finally, he lowered his head in resignation... and his rage was suddenly gone. Slowly he trotted towards the brown leather armchair and let himself fall in.

“It wasn’t him,” he said softly. “My father had nothing to do with the death of Ken Stark. But he was guilty of covering up the murder. Just like everybody else.”

“Tell us the whole story,” Miss Shoemaker asked. “From the beginning!”

Truman sighed deeply. “I don’t know who it was. My father never told me. He didn’t want me to know the whole truth. I only know that it was about jealousy.

“Someone on the movie crew hated Ken Stark so much that he sabotaged the car on the day when the street scene was to be shot. The movie was almost finished at that point. The brakes didn’t work, Ken Stark was run over and killed instantly.

“But my father and everyone else had been obsessively working on *Utopia* for months. They knew that the movie company would withdraw the movie at the last second if it came out that an actor had been murdered on camera for fear of a scandal. So they made a pact. They would all cover up the murder, cover up the perpetrator, and finish the movie as planned and release it in the cinemas.”

“What?” shouted Bob, stunned. “Cover up a murder just so that the movie could start as planned? I can’t believe it!”

“It was crazy, yes. But the work on *Utopia* had taken the entire crew to the limits of their efforts. For them, there was only this movie and it had to be released at any cost.”

Jupiter shook his head. “But it didn’t get to the cinemas. Something went wrong.”

“No. Nothing went wrong. But when the movie was finished and my father had calmed down, he realized what he had done. He was troubled by his conscience. He couldn’t release a movie that would have cost a man his life, and that the culprit had got off scot-free.”

“But why didn’t he go to the police?” Bob asked. “It wouldn’t have been too late.”

“If the public had learned that he had covered up for a murderer for weeks, his reputation would have been ruined. He didn’t want to do that to his family and the movie crew. But neither could he show *Utopia*. So he kept the film stock under lock and key, finally inventing the story of the dispute between the producers as a justification and making *Utopia* disappear.”

“And why did he hide it and not immediately destroy it? It would have been enough to cut out the murder scene,” Jupiter thought.

“The scene is cut out. The film stock contains not one shred of evidence of the murder.” He smiled weakly. “Sorry to disappoint you, Miss Shoemaker, but your exposé is not going

to work. There's no evidence—neither in the movie nor anywhere else.”

“I don't understand,” Pete confessed. “If there was no evidence, then what was the problem?”

“My father was in a dilemma,” explained Mr Truman. “He couldn't go to the police, it was too late for that. But he couldn't get the movie out after what had happened. He didn't want to destroy it either, after all, there were two years of work and a lot of money involved. So he hid it. The guilt gnawed at him forever. I only learned the story decades later, when I was grown up and he was an old man. Before that, he never confided in anyone.”

“I'm beginning to understand,” said Jupiter. “And he really didn't tell you who the killer was?”

Mr Truman shook his head. “It took me a long time to get over this story. We never talked about it again either until my father was dying and wanted to tell me where the film stock was hidden. I didn't care then, I knew I never wanted to see it.

“But then this article about Josephine Jonas appeared in *Vision Weekly*. She is the only one from that time still alive, and after all this while, she broke her silence—more like unintentionally. And suddenly reporters showed up at my door and I knew that this whole story would come out if I didn't find and destroy it as soon as possible.”

He looked up and looked Miss Shoemaker right in the eye. “Please, I beg you, forget your story.”

“Why should I?” she replied. “The world has a right to know what really happened back then.”

“Really? Do they? Why? So you could be rich and famous? That's all you care about, Miss Shoemaker. The world only wants to hear big, scandalous stories. It doesn't care what's behind them.”

“This is not just a scandal, Mr Truman, it's murder! The truth must be brought to light!” Miss Shoemaker argued.

“What for? Everyone involved is dead, including the killer. No one can be held accountable anymore, no debt can be paid. It's much too late for that. The only thing you can do with your story is to make my life hell—me and maybe Ken Stark's daughter. Because we're gonna get pounded by reporters. We're not gonna have a moment's peace.”

The Three Investigators looked from one to the other with concern.

“I can't make you do anything, Miss Shoemaker. You must make your own decisions. If you want to do your story, go ahead. But be aware that by doing so you're destroying the quiet, content lives of two innocent people. Whatever my father did, I am not responsible. And the days when sons have to atone for the sins of their fathers are surely over.”

“And what about Miss Stark?” Miss Shoemaker interjected. “Don't you think she has a right to know how her father really died?”

“If you think so, you can tell her. But you don't have to write an article for *Vision Weekly*.”

Michelle Shoemaker remained doggedly silent. Finally she said, “You can't tell me not to do my job.”

“I'm not telling you that,” Mr Truman said. “I just want you to think very carefully about the price of this work. And whether you want to pay it at the expense of other people.”

18. Miss Jonas's Secret

"Jupe! Telephone!" Aunt Mathilda's voice woke Jupiter up. Tired, he looked at the alarm clock—9:30 am.

He was still dog-tired. It had got very late last night. He struggled to get out of bed and dragged himself down the stairs.

In the corridor, Aunt Mathilda held the phone out to him. "Lazybones," she whispered.

Jupiter picked up the phone. "Yes?"

"Hi, Jupe! You up yet?"

"Good morning, Pete. I wasn't until your phone call. But I can always count on you."

"We're about to go for a swim. Are you coming?" Pete asked. "It's about time we finally got to enjoy the summer and stopped stumbling through scorching hot labyrinths."

"All right. Now I can't go back to sleep anyway."

"Why are you so upset?"

"I was awake late last night thinking about the whole story. I'm still not entirely sure it's right to sweep it under the rug."

"Well," Pete murmured. "Mr Truman was right. What's the point of exposing a murderer who's been dead a long time? Not to mention the fact that we would never have found out who it really was anyway. There's nothing we can do about it, even if we wanted to. Going to the police won't help. We're a few decades too late. Only Miss Shoemaker could've done something. I am still surprised that she finally gave in and promised not to write the article. I didn't think she could do it."

"Neither did I," Jupiter confessed. "But it's probably better that way. Now the film stock is just a pile of ashes. It's a pity. I would have liked to see it anyway."

"What about you, Jupe? You sound so weird."

"Oh, I don't know. Somehow a bitter after-taste remains. We may have solved the case, but I had imagined the ending differently."

"You can't have everything," Pete replied casually. "What now? Are you coming to the beach?"

"Yes. But a little later. I have something to do."

"What?"

"I'll tell you later. Bye." The First Investigator hung up. He hurried to get dressed and ate something for his breakfast.

Then he got on his bike and went to the flower shop. With a beautiful colourful bouquet he set off for the nursing home. This time he entered the building through the main entrance.

A friendly smiling young woman greeted him. "What can I do for you?"

"I want to take these flowers to Miss Jonas."

"I'm sorry, but Miss Jonas would rather not have any visitors at the moment."

"I know. Maybe you could hand her the flowers? With compliments of... of the workmen."

She frowned. "The workmen?"

Jupiter waved off. "She will know. I hope so."

The nurse nodded and was about to receive the bouquet when the lift door opened and a small, white-haired woman slowly stepped into the hall with a walking stick.

“Ah, Miss Jonas! What a coincidence! Somebody just dropped off some flowers for you.”

Josephine Jonas looked up, saw Jupiter—and smiled.

“Oh, how sweet! That’s the nice workman who wanted an autograph!”

Jupiter was surprised that she recognized him. He returned the smile.

“I was just going out into the garden. Won’t you come with me?” Miss Jonas said.

The First Investigator hesitated for a moment, then said, “Certainly.”

“I’ll take the flowers to your room, Miss Jonas,” the nurse said.

“Yes, yes, do that, please.” She slowly walked up to Jupiter, hooked up with him as if it were the most natural thing in the world and together they went out the building. They sat down on a bench in the garden.

“I’m so exhausted already,” said Miss Jonas. “I think I’m getting really old.”

“Forgive me for asking so directly, Miss Jonas, but do you really remember me?”

She looked at him indignantly. “But of course! You wanted my autograph. How could I forget?”

“That’s true, but we also talked about something else on my last visits. Do you remember? You told me about the secret of the gods.”

She looked surprised. “Oh! Really?”

“Yes. You see, my friends and I have now revealed the secret. We have asked the gods and found *Utopia*.”

“Really? Did you see that movie? I was young and pretty then, wasn’t I?”

“You still are,” said Jupiter.

Miss Jonas laughed. “You flatterer! It’s just like old times!” Then she got thoughtful. “So you found *Utopia*. And what did Edward say?”

Jupiter startled. “Edward Truman? He’s dead, Miss Jonas.”

For a moment, she seemed startled. “Oh... Oh, yes. Goodness, I forgot all about that. He hasn’t been with us for so long. Oh, those were the days. We were very happy until that movie. But *Utopia* destroyed everything. And I never had anything with Ken. Nothing serious, anyway. Just a little affair.”

“You mean Ken Stark?” Jupiter asked.

She nodded and lowered her head sadly. “Edward had thrown himself into misery. Afterwards I broke up with him immediately. It was a difficult time back then. I prayed a lot for his soul. And for mine. I should have gone to the police. But I couldn’t. I loved that man! Thank goodness he’s long dead or he’d probably be in jail right now.”

Jupiter wasn’t sure if Miss Jonas was even aware of his presence there.

With tears in her eyes, she looked up and gazed into the sun-drenched garden. “He did it for me.”